OSCAR SAVES THE UNION by James Norman

fantastic ADVENTURES

SEPTEMBER

20c

The LIQUID MAN

By BERNARD C. GILFORD

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It's annoying when folks just drop in... *but*

infectious dandruff

is more annoying still!

Get after it with LISTERINE at the first sign of trouble

What makes the infectious type of dandruff so annoying, so distressing, are those troublesome flakes on collar or dress . . . and the scalp irritation and itching . . . that so often accompany the condition.

If you're troubled in this way, look out—you may have this common form of dandruff, so act now before it gets worse.

Has Helped Thousands

Start right in with Listerine Antiseptic and massage. This is the medical treatment that has shown such amazing results in a substantial majority of clinical test cases . . . the treatment that has also helped thousands of other people.

You, too, may find it as helpful as it is delightful. Listerine is so easy, so simple to use, and so stimulating! You simply douse it on the scalp morning and night and follow with vigorous and persistent massage.

Thousands of users have marvelled at how flakes and scales begin to disappear, how much cleaner and healthier their scalps appear. And remember:

Kills "Bottle Bacillus"

Listerine kills millions of germs on scalp and hair, including Pityrosporum Ovale, the strange "Bottle Bacillus" recognized by outstanding dandruff specialists as a causative agent of infectious dandruff.

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Always follow with vigorous and persistent massage with fingers or a good hairbrush. Continue the treatment so long as dandruff is in evidence. And even though you're free from dandruff, enjoy a Listerine Antiseptic massage once a week to guard against infection. Listerine is the same antiseptic that has been *famous for more* than 50 years as a mouth wash and gargle.

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IF you're that man, here's something that will interest you.

Not a magic formula—not a get-rich-quick scheme—but something more substantial, more practical.

Of course, you need something more than just the desire to be an accountant. You've got to pay the price—be willing to study earnestly, thoroughly.

Still, wouldn't it be worth your while to sacrifice some of your leisure in favor of interesting home study—over a comparatively brief period in your life? Always provided that the rewards were good—a salary of $2,000 to $10,000?

An accountant's duties are interesting, varied and of real worth to his employers. He has *standing!*

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Just suppose you were permitted to work in a large accounting house under the personal supervision of an expert accountant. Suppose, with his aid, you studied accounting principles and solved problems day by day—easy ones at first—then the more difficult ones. If you could do this—and if you could turn to him for advice as the problems became complex—soon you'd master them all.

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VOL. 3
NO. 7

Fantastic ADVENTURES

TRADE MARK REGISTERED

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FANTASTIC ADVENTURES SEPTEMBER, 1941

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VOLUME 3
NUMBER 7

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DO WE HAVE TO DIE?

Is there a Power within that can give Health, Youth, Happiness, Success?

Can we cast off all fear, negation, failure, worry, poverty and disease? Can we reach those mental and spiritual heights which at present appear unattainable? To these eternal questions, the answers given by Edwin J. Dingle, Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, are unusual. He reveals the story of a remarkable system of mind and body control that often leads to almost unbelievable improvement in power of mind, achievement of business and professional success, and new happiness. Many report improvement in health. Others tell of magnetic personality, courage and poise.

The method was found in remote and mysterious Tibet, formerly a forbidden country, rarely visited by outsiders, and often called the land of miracles in the astounding books written about it. Here, behind the highest mountains in the world, Mr. Dingle learned the extraordinary system he is now disclosing to the Western World.

He maintains that all of us are giants in strength and mind-power, capable of surprising feats. From childhood, however, we are hypnotized, our powers put to sleep, by the suggestions of associates, by what we read, and by various other

experiences. To realize their really marvelous powers, men and women must escape from this hypnotism. The method found by Mr. Dingle in Tibet is said to be remarkably instrumental in freeing the mind of the hypnotizing ideas that paralyze the giant powers within us.

A nine-thousand word treatise revealing many startling results of this system is now being offered by the Institute of Mentalphysics, 213 South Hobart Blvd., Dept. 38E, Los Angeles, Calif. They offer to send it free to any readers who quickly send their names and addresses. Readers are urged to write them promptly, as only a limited number of the free treatises have been printed.

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The Editor's Notebook

A CONFIDENTIAL CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

SOMETIMES things happen in an editorial office that throw things into a turmoil, and an editor rushes around like mad, rearranging things, and finally, when he gets first copies off the press, he sits down and looks it over, and checks off broken promises, shattered intentions, and begins to wonder how to explain them to the readers. This is one of those months.

In the first place, you expected a Carson of Venus story in this issue, with a cover by J. Allen St. John. In reality, you have "The Liquid Man," by Bernard C. Gilford, and the cover is by Robert Fuqua. Well, we think the switch didn't pan out so bad. It's a swell yarn, and a swell cover.

And Carson will be back on schedule in the November issue.

REMEMBER how we all read the newspapers when the British were making their now-famous retreat from Dunkirk? It was claimed to be a miracle of military action. But author John York Cabot got a story the papers didn't carry. He got it from a newspaper reporter who was there. And when you read "Miracle At Dunkirk," don't snort too soon. Because one regiment of Frenchmen *did* hold, and how!

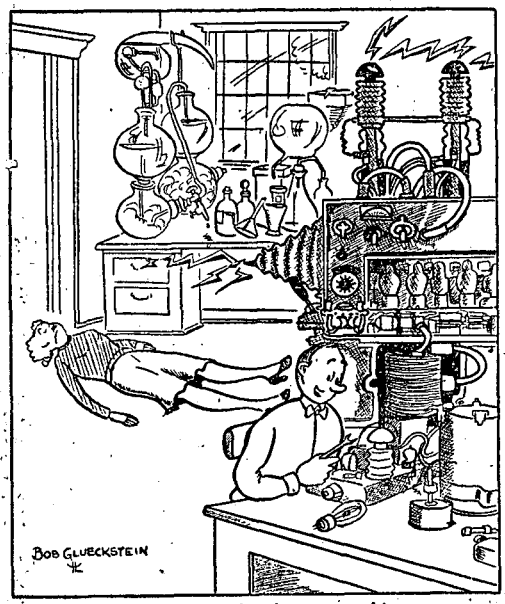
And to those gallant men, and the leader who inspired them, Britain owes a great debt. And we owe a grand story from a fine writer. As for believing it, we'll leave that up to you.

SOME months ago a friend of ours brought a young man up to see us. He said he wanted to introduce a lad who would like to write. Well, we have a story in this issue, a very short one, which is the first story from this young man. We'd like to know what you think of Leonard Raphael. We think he's going to come up fast.

The story is "The Man Who Saw Through Time" and is a mighty complete job for the mere thousand words Raphael used in writing it. Incidently, you doubting Thomas fans, that's his *real* name.

HURRAH! you say. And with reason. Oscar's back in this issue with a brand new adventure. It's about Indians, but don't begin thinking of scalping us until you read it. Oscar really goes to town in this one, and you'll love the funny little fellow even more when you've finished.

Which brings us to the news that he'll be back in a month or so, with another one (the best of them all), and this time he rates a cover. It'll be done by his creator (artistically), Julian S. Krupa. We've seen the sketch; it's the berries! You'll go for it, we predict.



"That's my new death ray machine, Dear. What do you think of it?"

DONALD BERN, our Phil Stong omnibus-of-the-decade's-best selection, is back in this issue with another of the hilarious Wilbury-Sakanoff episodes. This one's about a cross-country race, and it ends in quite a bit of running that certainly is faster than anything we've ever seen before! And it leads to an unexpected goal line. Don't forget to read it.

WE'VE dropped our quiz page this time, and we'll like your opinion on our decision to add approximately 4,000 words more of story material, by cutting down the reader's page. You've been asking for longer stories, and we've increased our novel each issue by that many words, in answer to your request. Let's have comments.

WE have good news for you who have taken the "Mac Girl" to your hearts. The Petty of the Pulps will remain with us, in spite of the army, and he is now working on two paintings featuring the "Mac Girl."

(Continued on page 112)

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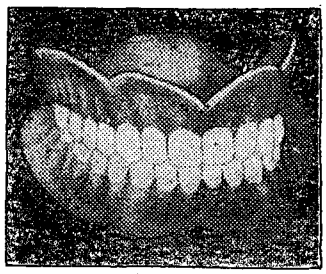

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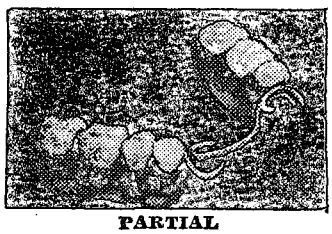

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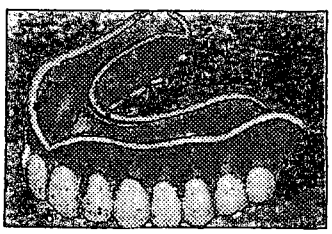

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DeSilva found a formula that made flesh and bone become liquid—and used it on himself!

THE clock said it was but a few minutes until midnight. Violet Corliss, as she watched it, was still awake, vaguely troubled. Her eyes glued upon the knob, she sat facing the door, waiting. The doorbell rang.

She went to answer it. First she turned on the porchlight and looked through the curtains. A man was standing on the steps outside, silhouetted blackly against the beating rain.

She opened the door.

"Oh, Juan," she breathed, "it's you. I'm so glad."

"I had to see you tonight, Violet."

He stood there for a moment, a little tense and strained, the water streaming in great drops from his sodden hat. Beneath it, his dark handsome face glistened in the yellow light that reflected from the moisture that clung to his brows and eyelashes.

Then, as they looked at each other, there was a sound from the lawn, a

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In the rain and night a grotesque, gleaming figure struggled with Juan DeSilva

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sound ever so slight. Both of them heard it. But silence followed it, with only the gloomy beat of the rain upon the roof.

"We've got to see this damn thing through, Violet!" Juan Silva said between his teeth. "I'm going out there."

He stepped off the little porch and stood in the rain, listening. Fear distorting her beautiful face, the girl watched from inside, unmindful of the chill air that penetrated through the open door. She saw the outline of Juan Silva's broad shoulders as the wet darkness enveloped him. His right hand was straying to an inside breast pocket.

But he had no chance to draw whatever was concealed there. From somewhere on the wet lawn, seemingly from nowhere, something moved. There was no further sound, no warning. Where a moment before there had been nothing, a dark formless shape resolved itself into being.

The girl couldn't see the thing very well in the dim light, but it was of the color of dark, muddy water. There was something about it that was terrifying. It was horrible and ugly, like an enormous jelly. There was no shape to it, but it moved.

Juan Silva saw it too and screamed, but that scream was choked off in its utterance. The formless wet thing enveloped him, dragged him down. High above him the shape rose, like a tidal wave. Then it came down, covering his body, and there was a noise as Juan Silva slid to the ground.

Terrified into immobility, Violet watched. She saw that shapeless mass move within itself, shake and shiver. Juan Silva was struggling like a madman. Violet could see half his head. Slowly, it began to turn, and as it did, it looked at her, appealing, begging for help; but she stood, hypnotized.

The head continued to turn round on the shoulders. Juan Silva seemed like a helpless sheep in a python's grasp. The wet-looking thing, whatever it was, pinioned his arms to his sides, held him to the ground by its own weight. And then, a crack, sounding like a pistol shot in the wet silence, as the vertebrae snapped, and Juan Silva ceased to struggle.

The dark, cloudy, muddy thing of evil on top of Juan Silva slid off. The body slipped to the ground, lifeless. The wet thing seemed to melt into the ground, seemed almost to be moving in the direction of the girl. It was then that Violet, in her mad terror, slammed and bolted the door.

Somehow she reached the telephone, and somehow she retained enough sanity to dial the number. Just as she heard a scraping noise at the door, an answer came over the wire.

—

LIEUTENANT QUANTE received the call at the police station. The first thing he heard was an hysterical moan, low and broken, and followed at last by a woman's voice. It took a moment for him to understand what she was saying.

"Now, wait a minute, lady," Quante interrupted her. "Murder, you say?" As he talked, he was signalling to a big cop sprawled in a chair. "What? Say that again. A liquid man? I can't hear you. Well, never mind that. What's the address? Yeh, got it. 1120 East Cypress."

As Quante repeated the address, the big cop wrote it on a pad of paper, and started to put on his raincoat.

Quante was still talking.

"We'll be there all right. What? A liquid man? Oh, sure, sure. Okay." She must have screamed, for Quante took the phone away from his ear as if it had stung him. The scream ended in a low moan. Then silence. Quante

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clicked the receiver. Still silence. He put down the phone.

"Come on, Ryan! We're going places. East Cypress."

The big cop grinned and followed Quante out through the front door at a run. A little black squad car was waiting at the curb. The two men piled in, the motor spurted, and the car shot ahead.

Quante glanced at the illuminated dial of his wristwatch. A little past midnight. He slammed the accelerator to the floor, urged the car through the deserted streets.

It was raining; had been raining all day. Now there was still a persistent, steady downpour, enough to make the streets slippery and dangerous. There was neither moon nor stars, and the places between the street lamps were shrouded in complete darkness. The air was chilly and damp.

Quante's lean face peered ahead as he bent over the wheel and watched the road. He was only an even six feet compared with Ryan's six-four, but the lieutenant was broad of shoulder, lean of hip, with long, muscular arms and hands like a pair of steel vises. His hair was sandy and thick; his tanned face was unlined. The military-looking trench coat that he wore was his trademark.

They headed up East Cypress, the siren screaming through the night. Ryan was twisting the searchlight, watching for the number. 11—11—1120, there it was. The squad car screeched to a halt, the men piled out.

The porch lamp of 1120 was turned on, and the weak yellow light from it sent a little illumination out on the wet lawn, as the two men ran up the slick-looking path.

"Hang on!" Quante thrust out an arm to halt big Ryan. They both looked down. What they saw was a huddled figure on the grass a few feet from the walk.

THE lieutenant jerked out his flashlight, and its bright beam played over the object. He bent down, and Ryan followed his example.

The figure on the wet grass was that of a man. One glance showed that he was dead. There had been a struggle, for the man's clothes were disarrayed and torn. But it was the hatless head at which the two policemen gazed.

The collar of the man's coat had been half torn away, revealing the neck. Even Quante, inured to similar sights, turned a little pale at this one. The head of the dead man had been turned round like a corkscrew. The figure lay on its chest, but the sightless eyes were staring up.

There was an undefinable terror in those dead eyes. Before the spark of life had left them, they had had a foretaste of hell, and fear! Mortal terror had been in that man's soul before he died. Those eyes were open, gaping. Fear! Fear of something horrible, inescapable, something terribly evil, and strong.

To have twisted that man's head around like that—! Twisted it until the vertebrae had snapped, so that the head hung limp on the shoulders. A job done as neatly as a hangman's noose could have done it.

But this, this was a feat of hands—no!—it couldn't be. No hands in the world were capable of doing that.

They went up to the door, and while Quante pressed the bell, Ryan applied his knuckles. They waited, glancing back at the huddled figure out there on the wet lawn. It was staring at them with those sightless eyes. It lay spread-eagled on its stomach, yet its face was staring at them.

There was no answer to their sum-

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mons. Lights were burning inside the house, but the silence was unbreakable.

"Let's give it the shoulder, Ryan."

They drew back a little, slammed against the panel. There was a splintering of wood, but the door still resisted.

"Bolted," Quante decided. "Let's do it again."

Once more the combined weight of the two men crashed against the door, and this time it burst open, taking half the jamb with it. The two men were inside.

In the lighted hall, lying at full length upon the floor, and in a dead faint, was the woman who had called. The telephone dangled from its cord in mid-air, and the receiver was off. They looked at the woman. She was young, in her twenties, and her face, though beautiful, was the color of chalk beneath its lipstick and rouge.

WITHIN the space of a minute, Quante gave the routine orders to Ryan and set about to revive the girl. When at length she opened her eyes, there was a wild, scared look in them. But to that Quante paid no attention.

"I'm Lieutenant Quante," he said swiftly. "I got your call, and now I want your story. What is your name?"

Her fright made her answer quickly.

"Violet Corliss." She sensed that Quante represented the help she had frantically called for.

"And that—that man—outside?"

"Juan Silva." She almost broke at that, but Quante soothed her. He was thinking over that name, Juan Silva. Strange and foreign-sounding.

"You were there when it happened?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Who did it?" His voice cracked like a whip.

"I don't know."

"But you saw it," Quante reminded her relentlessly.

"Yes, I saw it," she answered, "but it wasn't a man." Quante waited, fixing his cold gray eyes upon her. "I don't know what it was," she ended. "It looked like water."

"Like water?" Quante exploded. "Now, wait a minute. I know that you're scared, but you did see it. It couldn't have been water. It was raining, but the rain didn't kill him."

Violet Corliss could only shake her head helplessly, while fear lurked in her blue eyes and trembled on her red-tinted lips. Often her glance roved to a window or door, as if she dreaded the entrance of some thing of evil.

"Miss Corliss," Quante went on, "everything was wet-looking outside. Maybe it was a man in a raincoat?"

Violet Corliss shook her blonde head stubbornly.

"It was a big, wet-looking thing," she persisted. "Please believe me."

Quante considered a moment, curious lights dancing in his gray eyes.

"Well, anyway, let's have your story," he decided.

While he listened attentively, she told him what had happened in the two minutes before her frantic telephone call. As she spoke, he watched the terror mount again in her eyes, terror that even the presence of the police could not dispel. There was reason enough for her to be scared, he admitted, for he had seen that pitiful body out on the lawn. But her story about the killer was fantastic, and he told her so.

"It doesn't make sense," he said. "You were just too frightened to see clearly." He could hear another squad car arriving outside, and he went on.

"Did this Juan Silva have any enemies?" he asked.

"One," she answered. "His only enemy was his brother Ferdinand."

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"And why was he an enemy?" Quante wanted to know.

"Because of me."

"Go on," he urged.

"Ferdinand Silva was in love with me," she said frankly, and there and then Quante knew that he was hot on the scent.

"FERDINAND SILVA was in love with me," Violet Corliss repeated, "but I cared nothing for him, although he thought that I did at one time. Besides, he was always working in his laboratory and could think of nothing else. I was in love with his brother Juan, and Juan loved me.

"When Ferdinand discovered it, he became insanely jealous. He tried to separate us, but he failed. And then he threatened us, said that he would stop at nothing. Juan always carried a gun to protect himself, but tonight—tonight—he had no chance." Her voice trailed off in sobs.

Quante was getting some place, he knew. He would have his man before morning. Ferdinand Silva shouldn't be hard to find.

"You said something about a laboratory," he began. "You said Ferdinand Silva always stayed there. Where is this laboratory?"

"It belongs to a man named Lioski, down in the warehouse district."

Quante nodded with satisfaction.

"I think you have told us enough, Miss Corliss," he said. "And you need not have any fear for your own safety. I'll leave two men here night and day until we arrest the killer."

With that, he left the frightened girl, and found Ryan outside.

"The girl's partly out of her head," he told the big cop. "Her description of the murderer is fantastic, a big wet-looking thing! But I know who our man is, and we're going down to Lioski's laboratory right now to pick him up."

They stopped only long enough for Quante to give instructions to the crew of men he was leaving behind. Then they were in the squad car again and racing through the quiet streets, down into the old, dismal warehouse district.

Ten minutes were required for the trip, but it took some little time to find the exact place. It was a ramshackle building—when they found it at last—built of old red brick, with narrow, dingy windows. There was a bell to summon the proprietor, and big Ryan leaned on it.

The answer came sooner than they had expected, for Lioski had evidently not retired. He opened the door, and drew back a little at the display of badges.

"Lioski?" Quante inquired.

The answer was a brisk nod. Lioski was a little man, with thin shoulders and gray, straggling hair. His hands were long and bony, and they hung almost to his knees because of a very pronounced stoop.

"Come in, gentlemen," he invited, suspiciously nevertheless.

He took them into a little, dimly lighted office, and offered them chairs. Quante was taking a good look at the place. Dark and chilly and damp it was. Some of the windows were broken, and through the cracks not stopped with rags, the wind and rain entered stealthily. The sound of their own voices and footsteps echoed back and forth through the long reaches of the building, and the dim light in the little office threw long, moving shadows.

But if Quante wondered at the strangeness of the place, he gave no sign. Quickly, without wasting any time, he addressed Lioski.

"There was a murder committed on East Cypress this evening," he stated flatly, "and it is believed that a certain

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Ferdinand Silva is implicated. We are told that Silva worked here. Is that true?"

With narrowed eyes Lioski said,

"Yes." Instantly he was on the alert.

"When did you last see Silva?"

"It was yesterday evening," Lioski replied promptly. "He went away about nine, and he didn't return at all today."

Quante nodded.

"Now what exactly were your connections with Ferdinand Silva?"

LIOSKI paused to put on a pair of thick, heavy glasses.

"We were working together on a little experiment of our own," he said slowly. "Silva was a very brilliant young fellow, very brilliant. We used my laboratory and my equipment and I was to finance the thing. The profits were to be split equally."

"How was this experiment progressing?"

"Strangely enough," said Lioski, and his face assumed an odd expression, "Silva finished last night. It was all ready to be put on the market. That's what is so queer about his not coming back."

"What was this experiment?"

At this Lioski hesitated, not seeming anxious to divulge his secret. Quante and Ryan stared at him, threateningly.

Finally Lioski said:

"It was just a new surface wax."

Quante was silent. It was not what he had expected. Surface wax!

"Do you know anything of Ferdinand Silva's personal life or habits?" the lieutenant asked.

"Absolutely nothing," the little man said. "He was not one to tell things of that sort. I knew him only in a business way."

Quante bit his lip.

"Is that all you can tell us? Show us where Silva slept and worked."

They were led down a gloomy corridor that they judged to be nearly half a block long, and they wondered what was behind the frequent doors that they passed. It was dark and full of shadows, and the echoes were before and behind them, disturbing the bleak silence. When finally they turned in at the last door and Lioski flicked a light switch somewhere on the wall, both were glad.

The room they saw was small but crammed with odd-looking equipment. It was all unfamiliar to Quante, and he felt out of place and a little helpless.

"Are you sure the only work that Silva did here was on the experiment?" he asked.

Lioski nodded vehemently.

"Is there anything here that shouldn't be here?" Quante went on. "Anything that didn't have anything to do with the wax experiment, I mean."

Lioski wrestled with the thought for a minute, and then began to look around cautiously, not knowing exactly what to expect. His small black eyes peered into every nook and cranny of the little room. Quante and Ryan stood by doing nothing, watching the little scientist as he made his way about the shelves, and explored with his thin fingers the tiny crevices that were unapproachable to the eye.

Then he uttered a cry. Quante and Ryan were startled. They thought that he had put his finger into a mousetrap. But out of a tiny cupboard Lioski was dragging a miscellaneous collection of things, none of which the two policemen could recognize. Lioski set them on the work table, and turned his gaze to the pair of spectators.

"Well, what is it?" Quante asked impatiently.

LIOSKI made no answer, but returned his attention to what he had

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found. Among this collection were a long row of test tubes in a stand, each filled with a different substance, some liquid and some powder, and also a tiny burner and a dog-eared notebook.

"What do you make of it?" Quante interrupted again.

Lioski didn't seem to hear, but was scanning the contents of the notebook. His black eyes were very bright, and his excited manner soon began to affect the other two. The silence in the little room remained unbroken, while Lioski turned page after page of the notebook, and his eyes burned brighter and brighter. He apparently was on the verge of discovering something.

But when he looked up at last, the excitement had left his face, and he was pale and trembling.

"This is very strange, gentlemen," he murmured.

Quante and Ryan advanced closer, but the writing in the book was unintelligible to them. All it seemed to be was a mass of formulae and a jumble of figures. Lioski, however, seemed to have gleaned quite a bit of knowledge out of that jumble.

Lioski set the book down at last, and proceeded to take off and polish his glasses. The other two watched him impatiently but helplessly. And then they noticed that Lioski, despite his apparent calm, was perspiring freely.

But the little scientist's voice was composed when he spoke.

"This is something I knew nothing about," he said. "But it is undoubtedly some of Silva's work."

"Can you give us any clue?" Quante wondered.

Lioski shook his bullet-like head.

"This is something very intricate," he explained. "Very involved. Incredible, too! Something that confounds the imagination. If you gentlemen will just give me a little time, perhaps I can give you some valuable information."

"I can't do that," Quante said. "I'll have to take this notebook and other stuff along with me."

Reluctantly it seemed, Lioski gathered up the loose pages of the notebook, and together with the equipment, handed them over to the two policemen.

They left the little scientist just as the dawn was beginning to lighten the gray, overcast skies. Quante stood in the drizzle outside and paused to glance back at the old, dark laboratory.

"There is something strange about this," he told Ryan. "Juan Silva was killed in a way of which no human hands were capable. I'm beginning to wonder just what sort of man this Ferdinand Silva is."

CHAPTER II

Another Death

WHEN Quante arrived at headquarters that morning, he found both the Mayor and the Commissioner waiting for him. On the Commissioner's invitation Quante came into his office and the three men sat down. The two officials were very grim, and Quante waited, fearing the worst.

"Lieutenant," the Mayor began, "did you see the Herald this morning?"

Quante shook his head. The Mayor took a newspaper off the desk and handed it over. It was the Graytown Herald, blazing with headlines.

There were pictures too, one of Juan Silva lying under his sheet, one of the Corliss cottage. And under them was a complete description of the murderer, just as Violet had described him. Damn, how asinine and childish that story seemed in print!

"Well?" the Commissioner exploded. "Where did the Herald get that crazy story?"

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"The reporters were there," Quante said apologetically. "That's the same yarn the girl handed me."

"Yes," the Commissioner answered, "and do you realize that the Herald is making fun of the department?"

Quante shrugged tiredly.

"The Herald was just looking for a sensation. We've got a line though. When we pick up the dead man's brother, it's my hunch we'll have the murderer."

Here the Mayor interrupted.

"Lieutenant, you've got to pick up that man soon. Don't you see? Here the Herald has an eye-witness account of the murder, and it's the craziest story I've ever heard of. Every man, woman and child in Graytown is giving us the horse-laugh. We're trying to keep it out of the out-of-town papers. The Chamber of Commerce has already called and given us the devil; they want the man found and the thing hushed up might quick.

"Something that looked like a big gob of water! Dammit, man, can't you see?"

Quante could see only too well. After a hectic half hour with the Mayor and the Commissioner, he made another visit to the Corliss cottage. The night had passed well there, without accident and without alarm.

That day he spent alternately with the analyst in the headquarters laboratory, and directing the hunt for Ferdinand Silva. In both he was unsuccessful. The analyst could tell him nothing that Lioski had not told him, and by dusk that evening Ferdinand Silva was still at large.

At eight o'clock Quante visited the cottage once more. It had begun to rain again, not quite as hard as the evening before, but it was a fine, sullen rain that soaked body and spirit alike.

There had been two burly cops on duty at the house all day. In a pessimistic mood, Quante added two more to the force, making a total of four on the night shift. Still, he was not satisfied. As he walked down the path out to the squad car he felt a little chill run up and down his spine. The lawn was wet and smooth. He had some misgivings as he drove away. He felt that he should have stayed.

PERHAPS Quante should have stayed, but it is doubtful whether or not anyone, even Quante, could have changed the course of events that night at the Corliss cottage. For some two hours it remained quiet there. The drizzle outside still continued, and occasionally the sky was split with a jagged streak of lightning that was followed by the faint sound of thunder, like the distant rolling of drums.

Inside it was brilliantly lighted in every room, partly to bolster Violet's faltering courage and partly as a precaution. There was a big policeman posted inside the front and back doors, and two of them patrolled the lawn.

Quante telephoned about ten. Violet answered and assured him that everything was all right. They would take her down to the police headquarters tomorrow night, he told her. She laughed shakily. Nothing could get past their big bodyguard, she told him confidently.

Another hour passed, and the guards at the door began to yawn. The colored maid in her anxiety to keep them awake served hot coffee. Violet was trying vainly to read in the privacy of her bedroom.

Time passed slowly, however. Violet found it impossible to read, and she ordered the maid to draw her bath. The dull roar of the running water became the only noise in the otherwise quiet house, and the sound of it seemed like thunder.

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When the bath at last was ready, Violet leisurely undressed. The damp chill had penetrated from the night outside, and the bath seemed warm and steamy and very inviting.

Mechanically she scanned herself in a mirror, and with woman's eternal vanity, she admired herself. No wonder both Juan and Ferdinand Silva had desired her. She was immensely desirable.

Lazily she lifted a foot to put it into the water. That water was a bit warm, she thought. She thrust her foot farther in. Underneath, the water was s t r a n g e l y cold; —and then she screamed.

The maid heard that scream from the kitchen, and came running as fast as her billowing skirts would allow her. At the bathroom door she stopped, frozen and unable to move. Violet was in the tub, struggling madly. Then the water seemed to close in on her, dragging her down.

There was a milling and splashing as Violet fought desperately against that presence in the water. She was fighting for her life, and it gave her strength that she never had possessed before. Her arms flailed, beating frantically at the water which was closing about her. She could feel it upon her, cold, slippery.

The thing had her head, was twisting it, like Juan's head had been twisted. She tried to scream; no sound came from her restricted throat. Try as she might, she could not stop that terrible pressure that was crushing her. She was going to die, she knew it now. She was doomed!

Her head continued to turn. She was helpless against that irresistible power. Pain was whirling in her brain, fire was in her throat, her neck; it could twist no farther. The horrible agony of it clouded her senses. Her neck, so beautiful and white and smooth, was red and mangled. Her neck, tearing—hellish pain—red-stabbed blackness descending upon her. No escape from this wet horror. Then the red flames in her brain vanished; now only abysmal blackness—and she descended into darkness still deeper, into a pit that was bottomless.

THE colored maid, released from her spell of terror, ran shrieking to the kitchen. The bluecoats, seconds late in arriving because they hadn't known from where the first scream had come, poured into the bedroom. The maid pointed to the bathroom door.

For a moment the little rectangular room was filled with the four big men. Finally one of them came out and rushed to the telephone. The maid shrank into a corner, weeping hysterically, but no one noticed her. After a moment the three other policemen came out of the room. Their faces were serious, and Violet did not come with them. The maid, reading their expressions, sobbed and fell upon her face, and one of the big cops threw her a disgusted glance.

There was nothing done for fully five minutes. The colored maid wept spasmodically in the corner, and the bluecoats stood by, not knowing exactly what to do. Their lethargy was not shaken until they heard the siren of a squad car speeding down the street.

Quante came into the house on a dead run. One of the officers muttered something to him and then he went into the bathroom. Ryan came in a minute later and followed the lieutenant. When Quante came out there was impotent rage in his face.

"How did it happen?" he asked savagely.

"She was going to take a bath—" one of the policemen began.

"Yes, but how did he get in?"

"We don't know, but he was gone

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when we got there."

Quante bit his lip and then went back into the room. He stood there, surveying the scene. Violet Corliss was dead. Her head lolled back crazily from her shoulders, a broken neck.

He tried to reconstruct the scene. Nothing had been touched, so from appearances it would seem that she had just been preparing to step in. The sides of the tub were still wet, and the plug was out at the bottom. He called one of the cops.

"Is this exactly the way you found it?" he asked.

The bluecoat stared for a minute.

"When we came in, the tub wasn't quite empty. There was some water running out at the bottom. Somebody had taken the plug out."

Quante nodded and looked around. The window was locked, had been all the time, according to his orders. The maid had been in clear view of the door. No, there was no way to get in, nor to get out. Yet, there was Violet Corliss with a twisted neck in exactly the same way in which they had found Juan Silva.

And the plug out! Had Violet pulled the plug out? Impossible, the thing was worked by a handle on the wall, and there was no reason for her to have done that. Water running out!

He questioned the cops again. Perhaps ten seconds had elapsed from the time of the scream until the bluecoats had broken in. Ten seconds! The tub had been nearly full. All that water going out in ten seconds. What the devil!

Water again! Juan Silva had been murdered in the rain by something that resembled water, according to Violet's story. Now a tub full of water, the tub becoming empty in ten seconds, and no apparent way for the assailant to enter or leave.

HE lifted the pitiful figure of Violet out, carried her to the bed, covered her with a sheet. No use letting them get pictures of her like she had been! Then he questioned the maid, but with small results.

Ryan came up, spoke to Quante.

"It looks like the girl's first story about the watery-looking thing was true after all."

Quante glared at him.

"Don't be crazy. We're too old for fairy tales. Just because we don't know where a man could get in is no reason to believe there wasn't a way in."

They had thought the house was well guarded. Four stalwart men on duty. Well, he couldn't blame them. It was he himself who had failed, somehow, somewhere. And then he forgot Violet Corliss. The thing to do now was to get Ferdinand Silva, quick.

Lioski was the first man to see. Quante gathered up Ryan on his way out. The coroner would be there before very long, and he was the only one whose services would be needed now.

Their squad car raced down into the warehouse district, weaving through the late evening traffic. The little scientist must have heard the siren blazing blocks away for he was ready and waiting for them. Briefly, holding nothing back, Quante told him the story.

Lioski stared incredulously.

"It's fantastic!" he exclaimed. He sat down slowly. "Fantastic! I'd never have believed it. It must be, and yet it couldn't be. We're mad, all of us, the world is mad, to have such a thing exist in it."

They were all silent for a moment. Outside, the night was just as quiet. There was a feeling of evil in the very air they breathed. Unconsciously, Quante shivered, but he didn't know why.

"Lieutenant," Lioski said at length,

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"what do you think of this thing? Do you have any ideas?"

Quante's face was hard.

"I'm a cop," he said. "Of course I've heard a lot of crazy ideas, but they don't go with me. It's unusual, I'll admit, but it will look simple after we've figured it all out."

Lioski was not inclined to agree.

"You haven't the scientific mind, gentlemen," he argued. "Sometimes one can discover what he is looking for simply by sitting down and thinking hard. That's what I've been doing, remembering all the time what I saw in Silva's notebook. If you will listen, gentlemen, I shall try to explain."

Quante sensed the suppressed excitement in the little man's voice and manner. Hoping that here at last Lioski would give them the clue, Quante was glad to listen.

"It is like this," Lioski continued. "There are three states of matter, as you know, solid, liquid, and gas. The huge difference between these states is in the speed and activity of their molecules. In the solid the molecules are sluggish and slow moving, in the liquid, they are more active, and in the gas, or vapor, they are very active."

Lioski paused emphatically, while his small eyes gleamed from behind his thick glasses.

"A solid can sometimes be changed into a liquid," he went on, "or even into a gas, as in the case of combustion, by the application of heat. I believe that this phenomenon of nature was what Silva was thinking of and working on."

LIOSKI'S gravity was compelling. The single dim lamp that kept the room deep in shadows, was glaring upon his spectacles, and these two huge orbs stared at the listeners.

"You see, Silva had in his notebook a group of formulae pertaining to the make-up of the human body. In many places he has indicated the application of heat. Now the human body is about seventy-five per cent water. Suppose he applied this heat to the other twenty-five per cent!"

Quante didn't move; the thing intrigued him.

"Now remember, gentlemen," Lioski pursued, "I did not come to this conclusion haphazardly. It is well thought out. And more important, it fits! There is no other explanation. The three states of matter, the possible change from a solid to a liquid. Liquid, Lieutenant! Liquid, resembling water! Unbelievable, yes. But suppose Silva had tried his formula upon himself, upon the twenty-five per cent of his body that was not water. Think, Lieutenant! Ferdinand Silva has become a liquid man!"

If Quante had been struck in the face, his reaction could not have been more violent. Instantly he was on his feet, his lean, tanned countenance grim with the thoughts that burned in his brain.

"A liquid man!" he repeated, almost in a whisper, while the whisper echoed in the dismal corridors of the old building. "Those are the exact words Violet Corliss used when Juan Silva was killed." He paced the floor, his face dark and frowning. "No, it couldn't be. The girl was out of her head."

He strode to the window and looked out through the cracked and broken panes, standing with his back toward the other two.

"Still," he argued with himself, "there are the accounts of the two eyewitnesses, Violet Corliss and the maid, and both stories are identical. The bathtub murder too, with no other possible explanation. It seems incredible that Silva could have made his entrance and exit through the water pipes. Water, always water."

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Lioski was drumming the ends of his fingers on the arms of his chair.

"For myself, I have no doubt of it," he said in a voice sibilant with mystery. "We can't be medieval. Science is far more advanced than the layman realizes. We cannot deny the proof. You have an extraordinary criminal on your hands, Lieutenant, a liquid man."

Quante was almost ready to accept that fact.

"The thing that might be difficult now is catching him."

Lioski spread his hands in a futile gesture.

"But there should be no more killings. Silva has accomplished his purpose. He has killed the unfaithful girl and the disloyal brother. What else?"

"What will become of your wax experiment?" Quante asked suddenly and unexpectedly.

Lioski didn't betray himself.

"There would be no change in that arrangement," he said quite calmly, with a silken smoothness in his voice that somehow gave rise to a doubt as to the sincerity of his words. "Ferdinand Silva, even in his present state, and a murderer in the bargain, would still have a right to his share."

"I am glad that you feel that way," Quante answered with equal smoothness. "Because I have an idea that Ferdinand Silva, in his present mood, might be suspicious of anybody."

Lioski didn't move, gave no sign that he had heard. But Quante watched his eyes, and in them he saw the sudden birth of fear. They became haunted with a dread of something against which one couldn't fight, a Nemesis in a horrible form.

"Perhaps," said Quante, "you could find us a method of dealing with Silva if he really has become a liquid man." Quante knew that if the little scientist were made aware of possible danger to himself, of possibly suffering the same fate as Juan Silva and Violet Corliss, he might be able to give valuable aid in apprehending the killer.

But even now Quante had sufficient information to guide him in his search, and he could be patient with Lioski. At present Quante was more concerned with organizing the hunt, armed with his new knowledge. Saying that they would return, they left Lioski's laboratory.

"Why do you suppose he told us as much as he did?" Ryan wanted to know, when they were outside.

"Lioski's afraid," Quante answered. "Mortally afraid. His own skin is in danger, and he knows it."

LIOSKI himself was thinking exactly the same thing as he watched the two policemen depart. Quante's remark had troubled him, and he was pale under the poor light. The squad car rolled away, and the little scientist closed the front door gently, seeming afraid to make much noise. Back into the little office he went, and stood for a long time, looking at the floor, thinking and planning. It was a difficult course he would have to pursue, burning the candle at both ends. The prospect of what Quante had hinted at unnerved him.

Then at last he made an incongruous effort to square his stooped shoulders, and took his shuffling steps down the long, dim corridor to the workroom that had been Ferdinand Silva's. The door opened at the magic of one of the many keys on Lioski's ring, and he went inside. His groping hand found the switch and turned on the lights.

After a moment of searching, he took from out of one of the little pigeon-holes a bit of rolled-up paper, a single sheet that he had saved when he gave Silva's notebook to Quante. Carefully and

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painstakingly he read it again, frequently scrawling a few figures on a pad at his elbow. The secret, he hoped, was here on this paper, a secret that might mean a fortune if turned into the right channels. Lioski felt no qualms about what he was doing. That secret belonged to no one now; Ferdinand Silva had forfeited his place in society.

The light was slowly breaking through the curtain of darkness. Lioski felt that he was definitely on the trail, and his mind was racing ahead, exploring the possibilities of it. He sat stooped over the little workbench, the light shining over his shoulder and throwing a hunchbacked shadow on the rows of bottles against the wall.

"Good evening, friend Lioski!"

Lioski didn't move for a moment. There was something terrifyingly familiar about that voice, a voice that he had thought stilled forever. They were crisp, but dulcet, those words, with just a hint of something foreign about them.

Lioski faced about slowly. His steely eyes peered from over the rims of his thick glasses, calmly it seemed. He gave no sign of fear or even of surprise, but to still the shaking of his gnarled hand he steadied it on the table.

Across the room, just inside the single door, was a shape, vague and indefinite. The light from the hall outside was shining behind it, and some of the rays came through. Pale it was, like the water of a beautiful lake. But this thing was not beautiful.

"May I sit down, friend Lioski?"

"Of course," the little scientist managed to say, finding his voice at last. Gripping the slender thread of reason that still existed in his mind by the sheer power of his will, Lioski watched the visitor walk across the floor.

IT was walking of a sort, but the creature never left the ground, for both legs seemed to be merged into one pale shapeless column. It eased itself into a chair, how, Lioski could not tell, but it sat there, quite in shape like a man, with arms hanging limp over the sides of the chair. But the head, like a crystal globe, had neither eyes, nor mouth, nor any semblance of humanity.

"You are working very late, Lioski."

No mouth opened when those words were spoken; yet they were spoken, clearly, unmistakably. The whole head was just a formless blob, of the same texture as the body. Were it not for the events preceding this night, Lioski would have doubted his own sanity then and there. But now his thoughts were for his own safety, for there was fear in his heart, fear of this thing sitting so placidly in the chair opposite, as if it were the same darkly handsome Ferdinand Silva of a week ago.

"What do you want?" Lioski asked thickly, his thoughts racing in desperation and mortal terror.

"One always likes to talk with old friends." The last word was unduly stressed, and the little scientist could sense the threat in them.

"But—" Lioski spread his hands helplessly, a habit of his, a gesture which he used in any and all situations.

"Yes?" Mockery. A cat toying with a mouse.

"But—all this. You—like you are. And those two people—"

"Those two people that I killed?"

"Yes. I—"

"They deserved killing, didn't they? Loyalty, Lioski, that is what is noble in a man or woman. Don't you think so?"

"Why, yes. Yes."

"Never forget that, Lioski. I demand loyalty in my friends." There were no eyes in the pale head, yet Lioski knew that he was being bored through to the soul.

But he would play the game out. He

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had been a friend of Ferdinand Silva, a business friend at least. His only weapon against this thing which was now Ferdinand Silva was bluff.

The liquid man was speaking again, speaking with the voice of Ferdinand Silva.

"I have never found reason to mistrust you, Lioski."

"No!" It was emphatic, hopeful.

"How is our wax, Lioski?"

"It is fine—fine. It will be marketed soon. Very soon."

"I am glad. We shall make a fortune, Lioski, the two of us."

Those eyes, those invisible eyes, were on him again. He felt them. What was the mind behind those eyes thinking? There was moisture on Lioski's brow now, and his face had the whiteness of marble.

"We shall indeed." There was nothing to do but to agree.

"The saints in heaven preserve you, Lioski, if your tongue lies."

The scientist's bony hand gripped the table harder, while at the same time his will gripped his whole being and forced it to stand up to the test of those awful eyes that could see but couldn't be seen.

"By those same saints in heaven, Ferdinand, I am not lying."

"You will need the help of those very saints tonight, Lioski. I would not give their names to lies."

THE scientist cringed as from the blow of a whip. His tongue refused to form the words that were pouring from his tortured brain.

"There was a man came to see you today, Lioski." The malice in the voice whipped across the room like an electric spark. "He was a lawyer. You signed papers, you destroyed others. Strange things for a loyal friend."

"I swear that had nothing to do with the wax!" The little man was abject, the terror in his craven soul showing in his small eyes as they bulged from behind their thick lenses.

"Enough of that! Do not blacken your soul any more with such falsehoods. I know, Lioski, I know! I have more ears than the walls."

And even as Lioski watched, the thing opposite him had begun to change color. Darker it became, like the water of a muddy river, like a sallen, cloudy sky. It was a gradual change, but easily seen. A thing of evil; malignant, remorseless, inevitable.

Anger had crept into the thing's voice. Lioski knew now what accounted for that change of color. The acid that forms in the human body when the person is angry. Ferdinand Silva was angry now. The acid was discoloring him, making him ugly, like the slimy slit of a river bed, almost black, more terrifying now. Black, the color symbolic of death!

Lioski shrank into his chair. His hands shook, his whole frame hung loose. His strong will failed him.

"We have many a score to settle, friend Lioski. You were about to steal my other secret too, the one on that paper. But it shall not be." The voice ceased its droning for a moment to watch the other, to gloat it seemed.

"You don't mind my talking, Lioski?" The voice didn't wait for an answer. "Thank you. You see, I haven't talked to anyone for three days. Even I get lonely. And a man about to die is always very interesting." Lioski made no move other than to allow his hands to twitch.

"I have been very lonely. But it does not matter. I set out to accomplish certain things. They have been accomplished. It has been worth it. And tomorrow, I shall resume my identity of Ferdinand Silva, and what can they prove?

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"This thing has done something to my brain, Lioski. I enjoyed taking the lovely Violet in my arms and plucking the rose of her beauty. She had spurned me before, but in this last embrace, she would have stayed forever in my arms, had I not departed.

"At home, when we were boys, Juan always had the better of me in physical combat. The other night was different. My many arms are strong, Lioski. I have access to many places, the world is before me.

"But strange things have happened to my brain. When I gave the lordly Juan and the lovely Violet my last embrace, it awakened something in me, in my brain. My brain is a funny thing, Lioski. It is throughout my whole body, like the serpent. Bullets cannot find it.

"It is a great thing to kill, Lioski, as great as to create. 'And each man kills the thing he loves,' the poet said. I do not love you, Lioski, but I am going to kill you."

THE liquid man rose oddly out of the chair. Lioski did not raise his head. Instead he watched the nebulous shadow as it progressed across the floor toward him.

There was no use to scream, there was no one around, the building was empty. The whole neighborhood was deserted late at night.

The shadow stopped above him. Lioski felt something cold and slimy on his neck. The touch of it lit the fuse of terror in his soul, fanned alive the instinct of self-preservation. He managed to heave himself to a standing position.

"Listen to me, Ferdinand!"

Pressure on his throat, and a knife of agony that split his brain.

"Ferdinand! Those papers! They didn't mean anything, I swear it! Let me live. I want to live, live, live; I must live!"

He began to whimper like a whipped cur. His neck was being twisted; he could not see his assailant, thankful that he did not have to look into those eyeless eyes.

"Ferdinand, listen to me, I beg of you. You are killing me! I'm your friend, listen, in Heaven's name. I won't die, I won't, do you hear me, you devil, you filthy curse, do you hear me?"

And suddenly the little scientist managed to choke out a laugh. Hollow sounding it was, mirthless, more like the last cackle of a headless hen.

"Listen, Ferdinand. The formula. It isn't all there. Do you hear, Ferdinand?"

The pressure did not lessen. Lioski's scrawny neck continued to twist. It was the end.

"Ferdinand, you devil, I'm going to fool you, do you hear? You're killing me, but your fate will be worse. I have the secret, you fool. I've got it, damn you, you won't find it, you'll never—"

The pain was filling his head. His tongue and lips could move no more to curse the evil thing that was killing him. The cold, wet, slippery grip on his throat never relaxed, continued its remorseless twisting, until at last a merciful swoon helped the unfortunate Lioski into eternity.

CHAPTER III

A Dead Man Laughs

FULLY an hour after he had let Lioski's lifeless body slip out of his hands and slide to the floor, the liquid man still stood in that little rectangular room. His shapeless body was of even a darker hue now, resembling sluggish oil. The room was a shambles, filled with broken bottles, smashed equip-

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ment, reams of torn and scattered paper. The shelves that had been crammed were now bare, cubbyholes were emptied out, some of them had been ripped and torn apart.

The wet-looking column stood there for yet another moment, then left the room. Down the dank, narrow hall it went, with that curious gait that was neither walk nor glide. At last it reached the other offices, where Lioski and his clerk had resided.

Here the same procedure followed. Neatly stacked sheafs of paper were examined, then scattered aimlessly. Drawers and shelves were emptied as the search went on. Lioski's little living rooms off the offices received the same treatment. The mattress was torn apart, pictures examined, every nook and cranny of the place looked into. And the net result, nothing.

The liquid man half walked, half glided over to the window. Raining still, the mist shrouding even the dim light of the distant street lamp. There was no sound in the old, empty building. Only the eternal beat of the rain on the roof, the dismal drip of water from the eaves.

The dark thing stood silent, neither moving nor changing color. The eyeless eyes looked out through the tiny window into the wet world outside. The chill penetrated through a crack in the window, but the thing standing there gave no heed.

"Lioski has tricked me!" The voice was smooth, hard, without feeling. "The damnable little wretch, he has hidden the rest of my formula. Oh, Lioski, my friend, I should like to have you back for a while now. That lying, evil tongue of yours would tell the truth for once in your filthy existence."

Silence for a while more, and then again the voice droned on, speaking to the walls and to the darkness.

"Can I ever come back now? Am I doomed forever to remain like this? I shall be an outcast, the only one of my kind, and they'll hate me because I am strong and they are weak. But I shall be lonely. All day I shall have to hide and at night I shall have no place to go. Lioski, you devil, because of you I am doomed to this!

"The world before me, I told him. Yes. Money, all I want, but where to spend it? Power, but what to do with it? And loneliness; no one of my own kind. They will be afraid of me, those people. They hate me already.

"But for that I hate them. I will show them. You scorn me, do you? You make fun of me and try to catch me, do you? Well, you won't, I promise you that. I shall make you sorry that you hate me. You won't make fun of me, you'll hide in your cellars like rats when I pass. I am strong, stronger than you. Do you hear, you people of Graytown?"

The dark shape ceased talking. Those last words had been vengeful. At first bewildered, frightened at the loss of the formula that would make him an ordinary man again, Ferdinand Silva now grew morose. Those people of Graytown, the like of whom he could never be, became his enemies. Those three he had killed, they had been his friends, but traitorous friends. To Ferdinand Silva those three now represented the human race, which he now regarded as something foreign to him, something to be destroyed, simply because they were ordinary men.

He made his way in his peculiar gait out through the office and down into the street. It was still raining outside, and the sidewalks were wet and glistening. Ferdinand Silva was now a creature of the rain and the wet and the mist, and quickly he melted into the night.

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"You signed certain papers today, Lioski," accused the liquid horror

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WHILE his quarry, the liquid man, was ransacking Lioski's laboratory, Quante was having a long talk with the police chemist. But before this conversation had progressed very far, Quante was summoned hastily to the Commissioner's office. There he found both his superior and the Mayor.

"They've just come in with the report that Lioski's dead body has been found in his own laboratory," the Commissioner began.

Quante stared.

"But I was there scarcely an hour ago."

The Commissioner nodded grimly.

"I know," he said. "But the cop on the beat found the door swinging wide open, and went in to investigate. Lioski was killed just like the other two."

"And you, Lieutenant," the Mayor put in, "you come in with a story about a liquid man!"

"I'm just about convinced that it is the true explanation. I think we ought to play safe in the face of the facts. Let the people know about it, give them the proper warnings—"

"No," said the Commissioner emphatically. "You should know that, Quante. We can't afford to publicize this thing too much. Besides, these murders so far have all had a motive, and the slate is clean. There will be no more killings."

"I'm not too sure of that," Quante protested. "When you have an extraordinary criminal to deal with, you can expect anything. If he really is a liquid man—"

The Mayor interrupted again, a savage expression on his red face.

"I don't care what he is, a liquid man, or anything else. The thing has to be kept quiet. And it's up to you, Lieutenant, to find this man, whatever he is."

Quante looked doubtful and angry at the same time, but he said nothing. Here were two men in Graytown with whom he couldn't argue.

The phone rang on the desk.

"Hello—hello! Hello!"

The Commissioner slammed back the receiver.

"Line's dead."

Again the instrument buzzed. Again:

"Hello! Hello!"

Quante grabbed the phone.

"Hello, Operator. Operator!"

Silence. And then they became aware of something. Telephones were ringing all through the building. A shrill, metallic, ever-lasting summons.

"There's something up," Quante grated through his teeth. "Commissioner, get every available man to the telephone exchange. Ryan and myself will go on ahead. Back us up."

He slammed out of the office, found Ryan, and ran outside. They piled into the parked squad car, and sirened down the street.

"What day is this?" Ryan wanted to know sleepily.

"Still the same day," Quante said, "four o'clock in the morning. One hell of a night!"

Behind them, they could now hear other sirens. The Commissioner was rooting the men out, and reinforcements were on the way. Quante set his teeth and kept to the road. The red brick building of the telephone exchange loomed up ahead. Four o'clock in the morning.

PRISCILLA TOWERS, the night operator, had been on duty at the exchange since midnight. This night, like all other nights, passed slowly. She glanced at her watch. A quarter to four. The hours were dragging; it was getting terribly lonesome.

She went over to the mirror, began to repair her make-up. Priscilla was

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only twenty, and beautiful in the bargain, a golden blonde, with eyes that could not have been mistaken for anything but blue, and finely modeled features. Tall, slender and willowy she was, with the freshness and appeal of youth.

As she stood there, she felt a sudden chill, as if someone had opened a window, and let in the cold and rain of the night. She turned around, definitely uneasy. There was a little wind, frigid and damp. The room was a long one, possibly someone had been careless enough to leave the window open at the farther end. It was dark down there. She shivered, that window had to be shut, dark or no dark.

She went around the switchboard, her heels clicking sharply on the hard wood of the floor. But before she had taken a half-dozen steps she stopped. The blackness down there at the other end was foreboding. She retreated again to the lighted region.

For perhaps a minute she waited. The only sound was the swish of the rain against the glass pane, and the tiny whistling of wind through that open window, wherever it was. Priscilla could feel herself growing cold, could feel strange prickles of fright running up and down her spine.

From around the corner of the switchboard something m o v e d. It wasn't the wind, nor was it the rain. Yet, like the wind and the rain, it was without definite form or shape. Almost black it was, but a dull, discolored black, a big, heaving jelly that sprawled on the floor, that moved quite like the sea, in waves, a something that seemed to breathe from its invisible pores malevolence, and hate; hate of a most fierce kind.

For a moment, it didn't stir. Priscilla, standing against the wall, with her hand to her throat, was immobile, too terrified even to scream. There were no eyes, but that ugly mass on the floor seemed to be watching her, watching her like a wild beast does its prey just before the kill.

And then its shape changed. The wet-looking thing began to flow, like a sluggish river. It grew in height, began to take shape, and all at once, there before the horrified girl, was a man-like thing, but dark and liquid, reflecting the light.

It advanced upon her, the globe-like featureless head bent slightly forward. Half-gliding, half-walking, it began to cover the short distance that separated them.

"Don't touch me, you filthy thing!"

"Spunk! Glorious spunk!"

For a brief moment, Ferdinand Silva halted. Then he laughed shortly, a hard, bitter mocking laugh. The slow advance continued like a relentless Juggernaut.

AND then little Priscilla Towers, only one hundred and fifteen pounds of terrestrial matter, a mere slip of a girl, sought to do what three others had failed to do, to escape. Like a startled gazelle, she slipped away from the wall and began to run down the length of it. A ringing laugh followed her progress.

Her heels ceased to click. She was in a dark corner, and she stopped. She could feel herself quaking with the fear that possessed her, and tried to steady herself. The building was silent. Perhaps she would escape after all, perhaps that thing wouldn't find her in the dark.

She w a i t e d, scarcely daring to breathe. Vaguely, she remembered that story in the papers, that strange tale that told of just such a thing as this. The thought only increased her terror. Something cold touched her, colder than the wind. It wasn't the wind!

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Her mouth opened to scream, but no sound came. She tried to run, something grabbed at her, and she fell to the floor.

The wet thing was over her now, slithering like the clammy coils of a snake. She couldn't rise, the weight of it held her down. The wetness of it touched her skin. For a long time, it seemed to her, she lay there in the darkness, on the brink of eternity, waiting only for those cold hands to close upon her throat, just like—

But no! The slimy coils on her throat exerted no pressure. What was it waiting for? The wet wave seemed to slide down her white throat, lightly it seemed, down—

She could feel the blood rise to her cheeks, not fear this time, nor terror. Indignation, hot and turbulent, was in her heart. The filthy beast! She struck out with her hands, flailing madly. Then she rolled over, exerting almost superhuman strength. She was out from under it now, and on her feet again.

Her heels clicked a mad tattoo down the boards. She could feel rather than hear the thing following her. She reached the lighted switchboard. The plugs! Madly she worked them, ringing every telephone she could.

She hadn't time to answer those insistent buzzes she sent out over the wires, hadn't time to answer the imperative: "Operator! Operator!" that summoned her again and again. The thing was almost upon her again, clutching at her with long glistening hands.

BLINDLY, she began to run, down the hard boards, past other switchboards, blindly in the darkness. Time and again she tripped over wires, only to lift herself up again and run on. She couldn't stop, death was behind her, or worse than death! She ran full tilt against a wall. She fell, and it seemed an eternity before her senses returned and she picked herself up.

She could hear sirens now, drawing closer. She didn't know whether they might mean help or not, but she ran on. Back to the lighted region. A cold, wet hand was on her shoulder, another grabbed her waist. She was on the floor again.

But the thing had heard the approach of the sirens, too. Those hands were like vises now, deadly. The thing was angry; she had almost escaped. This time those hands did not attempt a caress, they were at her throat! Pressure, relentless, twisting!

A noise, a pounding at the door, then after a second, a splintering of wood. Running feet. The cold hands on her throat relaxed, left her. There were shouts all around, noise, a dozen pistol shots. She could hear curses, too.

"Damn him, he got away!"

There was a man bending over her, and she was sobbing on his broad shoulder. The man wore a wet trenchcoat, and when she opened her eyes, she was looking into gray orbs but inches away. The face above her was tanned, and wet from the rain outside. Just a man, but right now, he was the most welcome sight in the world.

Quante's thoughts, as he held Priscilla Towers in his arms and felt the frightened sobs tremble through her body, were strange indeed. This girl, he knew, was the only one who had survived an encounter with Ferdinand Silva, the liquid man. Silva would return. But Priscilla was somehow more than a hostage. Just a woman, maybe! But there was a glow beneath Quante's tan and a light in his eyes that had never been there before.

PRISCILLA TOWERS was taken to the police station and immediately put under close guard. Quante seemed

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especially concerned over her, and that was unusual for Quante.

"I believe you've fallen for the girl," someone told him frankly. He was so indignant when he turned on his accuser that it practically amounted to an admission. But he gave them no opportunity to persecute him further.

The Mayor and the Commissioner were still closeted in the latter's office; Quante burst in upon them without being announced.

"Ferdinand Silva attacked the girl at the telephone exchange," he told them quickly. "A complete stranger. We're in for it now, and we might as well face it. Nobody in town is safe, and the best thing to do is let everybody know."

"You've got your orders, Quante," the Commissioner barked.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," said the Commissioner, "that we are going to keep this thing as quiet as we can. I'm afraid it's gone too far already."

Quante's anger was ill concealed.

"Do you realize that every human being in Graytown is in danger? And all you do is worry about keeping it quiet. We don't want it quiet. We want it on the front pages, so the people will be warned. A liquid man. It's crazy, but it's happened. We've got to fight it."

"The Commissioner has his orders from me," the Mayor said flatly. "If you can't carry them out, Lieutenant, we'll find a man who will. I can't have the Chamber of Commerce on my neck."

"Damn the Chamber of Commerce," said Quante, and strode out of the office.

Quante was angry, but he was still determined to see the thing through. What he needed now was a lead.

SCANLON of the Graytown *Herald* got the first lead, but he didn't tell Quante. Scanlon was above all a newspaperman and wanted a sensational story, so he kept this quiet.

"Nick," he told his photographer, "what we need now is a picture of this liquid man guy. I got a hot tip. Are you game, pal?"

Nick, after some coaxing, expressed his willingness. The two men got into their black coupe, and sped to one of the poorer sections of town. They pulled up before long in front of an ancient-looking frame house. It was easy to tell from its state of disrepair, its curtainless windows, some of them with broken panes, that the house was vacant. There were puddles of water from the last rain in the grassless yard, and a single tree stretched its bare branches yawningly to the leaden sky. They sloshed up the crooked, dented walk and stood before the door.

"One of the neighbors here," Scanlon explained, "heard a queer noise on the first floor in front. From what he says, it sounds pretty good, but he was too scared to look very hard. Now, it's dark inside. We'll catfoot it, and when we locate him, I'll flash my light in his face. Then you take your flashlight picture. He'll be surprised and dazed, but as soon as you get the picture, beat it next door and call the cops."

Nick nodded, and followed Scanlon up on the porch to the door. The portal hung half open, just enough to permit an entrance. They were careful not to touch it, for fear of the squeal of its rusty hinges.

They slipped inside, Scanlon in the lead. The boards under their feet creaked ever so slightly, despite their caution. Scanlon passed through an open door to their right. Inside it was as black as a tomb, but somehow Scanlon sensed a presence.

Nick jockeyed into position. They would try it here. The liquid man had

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changed from the rôle of hunter to the hunted!

"Ready!" Scanlon whispered.

He clicked the switch, and a bright beam of light sprang across the room. There was a noise, like a disturbed beast being aroused from its sleep. Scanlon directed the beam at the noise. Something rose up and out of the darkness, big, glistening, like a malevolent jellyfish.

"Get it!" Scanlon yelled.

Nick focused the camera, and for a split second the room was as bright as day. Grimly it revealed the central figure of the room, from among the litter of broken furniture.

Like an angry beast, it hissed at them. Even before the light died away, it rose high, hurtled itself toward them.

"Scram!" Scanlon yelled.

Both men made for the half-opened door. There was a tremendous scramble in the complete darkness. Something hit Scanlon in the back, sent him reeling against the door-jamb. Blood was in his face as he staggered through and made for the outdoors.

Nick was not quite as fortunate, for Nick was burdened with the camera. Something cold and slippery was on his shoulders, dragging him back and down. He swung his fist, felt something wet as he hit it. The wave closed over him, his shoulders hit the floor hard.

To the very last Nick was lashing out with futile fists, hitting something that gave under the blows and couldn't be hurt. Then something hit his head, and Nick fought no more.

Scanlon heard from without the sound of the combat, the sound of furniture being splintered and thrown about. Then something flew out of the door. It was Nick's camera, still intact.

Scanlon paused only long eough to grab that camera, and then being more wise than brave, turned around and ran. He didn't stop until he was a safe distance away, but he still hugged the precious camera.

"I've got his picture," he gasped, "a picture of the liquid man! And Nick's *dead* . . ."

LIEUTENANT Quante looked hard at the picture of the liquid man that stared at him out of an extra edition of the Graytown *Herald*. Only for a moment did he gaze at it, and then stormed into the Commissioner's office. It was then late in the afternoon.

The Commissioner's jaw fell when Quante flung the paper in front of him. There was a dead silence in the room while the man at the desk stared at the photograph. A photograph of a huge, wet-looking mass of something that resembled water, caught in the very act of hurling itself at the camera.

"A man died to get that picture," Quante rasped out. "And there were two other murders today, one of them a cop. That makes a total of six in less than forty-eight hours. Imagine what it will be if this thing continues for a week."

"But it can't go on," the Commissioner protested. "You've got to catch this fiend, Quante."

"Then give me a little co-operation," Quante barked. "There's no use trying to hush it up now."

The Mayor had burst into the office just in time to hear this last. He was more red-faced than usual. He had a copy of the *Herald* in his hand.

"I believe you're right, Lieutenant," he muttered, and sank heavily into a chair.

"It's about time," Quante said vindictively.

"I've just come from a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce," the Mayor said breathlessly. "The business men of this town are getting scared. It

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seems that every few hours a report comes in of another killing. The business men are ready to do anything they can to help."

"We'll need every bit of help we can get," Quante said.

"What do you want me to do?" the Mayor asked meekly.

"I've got to swear in special officers, all we can get. We've got to warn the people properly. State troopers, maybe even militia. We don't know what it will take."

"But isn't that going too far?"

Quante glared at the official contemptuously.

"All right then."

CHAPTER IV

Terror Stalks Graytown

IT was late the afternoon of the following day. Graytown had been warned; had been told to expect the worse. Most of the citizens had seen the picture in the *Herald,* the authentic photograph of the peril that threatened them.

Little Jacqueline Gower had seen the photograph, had been properly warned, but to her childish mind it had meant little. She was only five years old, a pretty child, with long curls that flashed yellowish gold, eyes blue and bright and wide.

The day was Sunday. The rain had stopped, although the sky was still dark and ominous. Pools of water stood in the back yard, but little Jacqueline Gower stayed on the stone path.

It was not until she came around the corner of the garage that she saw it. It resembled a pool of water, black and muddy looking. But it was the biggest pool in the yard. As she stood looking down at it curiously, it commenced to move.

Already she had remembered the picture in the paper, and the numerous warnings from her father too. But her curiosity was stronger. She lingered.

The queer-looking puddle had risen in height, was now taller than she was. It seemed of a lighter color than before, and as it began to take shape before her startled eyes, she recognized it as the shape of a man. But as it made no movement toward her, she felt no alarm.

"A child!"

The thing had spoken. A look of amazement grew upon her childish face.

"A child!" The voice was incredibly soft. "The rest of mankind hates and fears me. But this child! I wonder. Can it be possible that this little one—?" There was an agony of hope in those tones, a terrible longing, a loneliness.

The thing stretched out an arm, a long watery arm. Little Jacqueline Gower drew back, afraid now for the first time. And then as the thing advanced closer, she screamed.

Instantly the manner of the strange thing changed. The child felt repelled by him as had all the others! His color darkened rapidly, growing black, menacing. She had had no time to retreat; she was in his grasp. In a moment the tiny body was hanging limp.

The creature let it drop, and it fell in the mud and wet of the yard.

QUANTE'S squad car received the call immediately after the tragedy. Five minutes found him and Ryan at the Adams Street address and pushing through the huddled knot of fearful people.

There was something lying on the ground covered with a white sheet, and that something was pitifully small. Quante knelt and pulled back a bit of the sheet, but replaced it immediately. He had seen enough. His face was

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white and drawn. His eyes held a stricken horror and a helpless pity—and a growing rage that began to engulf his soul in a surging wave.

"Did anyone see it happen?" he asked the entire group in hoarse tones.

They shook their heads.

"Where are the parents?" Quante asked.

"She didn't have any mother." A man had stepped forward to confront Quante. "I'm her father.

"I should like to go with you," he said very gravely, his voice dull and sick. "Perhaps I could be of some help. There is nothing here, now, for she was all I had. If I could be of any assistance in finding the murderer, I should be very glad." There was no break in his voice, only a sullen, stricken determination.

Quante seemed to understand the other's feelings.

"All right, if it would please you."

"My name is Gower," the man said, extending a friendly hand.

"I'm Lieutenant Quante,"—taking the hand.

And thus a strange alliance was formed.

BEGINNING with the murder of little Jacqueline Gower, Quante had a busy morning of it, sending out warnings, organizing his forces to patrol the town, following up the slightest clues.

The people of Graytown meanwhile had become thoroughly alarmed. The picture and the stories in the *Herald* had convinced them that peril faced every citizen. As each new report of any killing was broadcast, their terror rose. They did not even consider themselves safe in their own homes, since the murder of Violet Corliss. Businesses were temporarily abandoned, the streets were almost deserted, and the people cringed and started at the slightest sounds or shadows. But Quante was glad in a way for that very terror, for their new caution might save some of them.

The out-of-town newspapers had slowly awakened to the real story, and Graytown's terror was becoming publicized nationally. Visitors no longer came to Graytown. The little city was left isolated, helpless, alone.

About noon Quante managed to see Priscilla. She appeared somewhat recovered from her terrifying experience, and immediately she asked him about his progress.

"It doesn't look too good," he admitted. "It will take a system. He's clever, and strong, and entirely without feeling."

He watched her during the ensuing silence. Still beautiful, despite a bit of hysterical crying. Somehow he felt a little foolish. This was no time to be falling in love, when he had the biggest fight of his life on his hands.

Priscilla Towers was in danger, he was certain of that. She had been the only one who had escaped; Ferdinand Silva would return. If anything happened now to Priscilla!

He was still chatting with her when the call came from the Maple Street reservoir. He waited only to pick up Ryan. It was just a bit after noon when they arrived, and the sun, out for the first time in many days, was gleaming through the clouds on the placid surface of the water in the big concrete pool. A man in a leather jacket was there waiting for them.

"I'm Randall," he greeted them. "My assistant was the one who put in the call. Come up here on the wall, and I'll show you."

The two policemen followed him up a series of concrete steps and onto the wall. This wall was the rim of the reservoir and was six feet in width at the top. Here their guide stopped and

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pointed out over the water.

"I've been reading about your liquid man," he said, "and being in the Water Department, I thought I'd better keep my eyes open. About an hour ago, I was walking around the wall up here, and I noticed something peculiar out on the water. It wasn't anything that I could see, but the water seemed disturbed. This was odd because there wasn't any wind, the aqueduct gate was shut, and the pumps were idle. So I gave orders to keep the gate shut and the pumps not to be worked, and then I called you."

"That's good work." Quante was elated. "He may be in there, and if he is, then he's trapped. Trapped!" There were hard lights in his eyes. Here might be their chance! "But it's likely to be a tough job getting him out," he went on.

"I've been thinking about that," the man in the leather jacket put in. "This is the way I figure. There's enough water in those standpipes," and he pointed to the tall, white towers, "to supply the city with water for about two days, without any emergency of course, and if it's used sparingly. If we keep the gate shut and the pump valves idle, he can't get out of the reservoir."

"Two days, is it?" Quante repeated. "The first thing we've got to do is get the man power out here, have them ready for anything."

"What are you going to do?" the man in the leather jacket wondered.

"Ferdinand Silva is a rat," Quante answered grimly. "We'll burn him out just like a rat."

QUANTE began to issue his orders, swiftly, confidently. He knew he couldn't afford to pass up this chance, because another might never come. At last he had Silva where he couldn't escape.

Two days! It seemed a long time, but Quante wasn't quite sure about how he was going to get the liquid man out of the reservoir. But at least while they had him cornered there, he could not continue his depredations throughout Graytown. Only two days. Again it was a fight against time, for in two days the reservoir would have to be opened again, or the people would have to go entirely without water.

Quante and Ryan kept watch atop the reservoir wall until the reinforcements could arrive. The few State Troopers and every available cop were the first on hand. But Quante had also asked for civilian volunteers, and the effect was as good as he could have hoped. Within an hour after the first appeal had been broadcast, cars began to drive up singly and in groups, and out of them poured men, men of every profession, who had deserted their work to come out and help rid the city of a menace.

As they came, each man was armed, with weapons of every description taken from the police arsenal. That being accomplished, the improvised army was placed in position, forming a complete circle about the reservoir, at a distance of about one hundred yards.

The reason for this great distance was not immediately apparent. Quante had been conferring with Randall, and between them they had decided upon the plan of action.

"We'll pour a thin layer of oil on the water," Quante told his subordinates, "and set fire to it. The liquid man will be in the same position as a swimmer under the same circumstances. He must either come to the surface where the oil is burning or remain beneath the surface and be drowned. If he does escape through the fire, then we will shoot to kill."

Quante was not quite certain what

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effect bullets would have on the liquid man, but he made no mention of his doubt. Instead of wasting time on idle speculation, he immediately set to work. An oil truck, according to Quante's order, had already arrived, was waiting now.

The surface of the water in the reservoir was exceedingly calm, almost unnaturally so. But Quante was certain that his quarry was still there. Somehow he felt that their activities were being watched by a malignant eye.

The oil was ready. Quante stood by anxiously as he saw the black fluid being spread over every inch of the surface of the water, until it became a dark, glistening pool. Still no sign came from the reservoir, no indication to proclaim the liquid man's presence.

At last everyone had withdrawn with the exception of Quante. He himself was to set the match, the match that he hoped would spell the doom of the liquid man. Ryan had wanted the job, but Quante felt that this was a task that belonged to himself alone. Ryan and the others were forced to look on from a safe distance.

At last, after what seemed an eternal delay, the men of the circle saw the lone figure of Quante running toward them, and simultaneously a great flame blazed toward the sky. The heat from it could be felt almost at once, and the men understood why they had been stationed at this distance.

WHILE the fire continued to burn, leaping red and high, the huge circle of armed men began their grim watch. Machine guns, rifles, and revolvers were all held at the ready, in the improbable event that the liquid man should miraculously appear through that curtain of fire. The faces of the men behind those weapons were hard, expectant, almost hoping that the fiend would appear, that they might avenge the slaughter that had plagued Graytown.

But they waited in vain. For more than an hour the flames burned hotly, and the glare was reflected in the earnest, perspiring faces that watched it. No sign was given, however, of what had befallen the liquid man. Toward late afternoon the fire died low and at length became extinguished altogether.

The concrete walls of the reservoir were still hot underfoot, but as soon as it became possible, Quante and his men scrambled atop the walls. The water of the reservoir still appeared the same.

"Did we get him?" Ryan asked.

"I don't know," Quante answered truthfully. "The water there must have gotten pretty hot."

Randall was shaking his head.

"I doubt it," he said ruefully. "It requires a tremendous amount of heat to affect a large body of water such as this. And as for the liquid man drowning, I was wondering about that too, while the oil was burning. It's quite possible, you know, for the liquid man to be able to breathe under water in the same manner as a fish does. You remember that he was able to travel through water pipes when he killed Violet Corliss."

Quante was forced to agree.

"We still have an hour or more of daylight," he pointed out. "What about putting dye in the water, Randall? We can then distinguish the liquid man from the rest of the water by the difference in color."

It had possibilities, and they could not afford to let any chance slip by. Dye in sufficient quantities was easily obtainable; they had to wait but a short time for it to arrive. Meanwhile the circle around the reservoir, although it closed in and became more compact, still continued its tireless vigilance.

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Quante retained his confidence.

On the reservoir walls however he placed another circle of men, a circle of his blue-coated cops; and these he armed with machine guns.

"You'll be able to see the target," he told them, "by its lighter color. When I give the order, blast away."

The dye was brought in good time, and when everything was in complete readiness, it was sifted into the water. Then they stood back, breathless, waiting. Eyes and nerves were strained, anticipating.

Slowly the color of the water in the reservoir began to darken, as the dye commenced to take effect. It was an eerie scene, that line of men atop the wall, peering fixedly down into the depths, searching out their prey. Quante was the most anxious of all. In those blackening waters he perceived the end of their hunt; the goal was in sight. Priscilla and Graytown would be rid of its menace.

By this time the water had entirely taken on its gloomy hue. The onlookers were tensed. Then a cry went up; they had all glimpsed it at once.

Deep down, very near the bottom, was a spot, of indefinite size and shape, but unquestionably of a lighter color than the water.

"It's him!" Ryan yelled.

The spot was moving, and at great speed through the depths, so great that it was difficult to follow its progress.

"Give it to him!" Quante barked out.

FOR a space of seconds the sharp rattle of machine guns filled the quiet air, while the surface of the water writhed under the impact of bullets. But that very water and the fact that he was so deep were the things that saved the liquid man. The aim of Quante's men was hurried and the bullets traveling through many feet of water deflected their course.

Nevertheless, they continued to pound away at that elusive, fast-moving, light-hued streak. But under their very eyes, so gradually that it was barely discernible, the streak disappeared. Abruptly the shooting ceased.

"What happened to him?" Ryan asked, surprise in his ruddy face. "Did he absorb the dye?"

Quante consulted the police chemist whom he had brought along. The chemist shook his head.

"I hardly think so," he explained. "Your shooting at him no doubt enraged him. I told you once before that an acid forms in the human body when the person becomes angry.* That acid has probably darkened the liquid man right now just enough so that you can't see him."

It was a disappointment; they had placed great faith in the dye. While one hope after another had been blasted, the liquid man still defied them. Quante paced up and down the wall, despair biting at his soul. To have Silva trapped, and be unable to get him out!

"He's just too strong, too clever for us," Quante muttered aloud in his dejection. Then, with a visible effort, he pulled himself together. "But he's still trapped in the reservoir. And we've still got time. We've got to find a way, we've got to!"

The Mayor himself, with a number of outstanding citizens, had visited the reservoir during the battle. They were

* The human body secretes a distinct proportion of acid from various glands during emotional stress, and especially during anger. It is this secretion that causes us to "see red" and to experience an increase in pulse rate, and in explosive energy. This explains how a man can hit much harder under the stress of anger, than he could normally. Chief disturber is the adrenal gland, which incites warlike reactions in the human mind through its effect on the bloodstream. Emptied directly into the blood, the acids effect the body almost instantly and thus, the brain.—Ed.

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all relying on Quante's ingenuity. Ferdinand Silva was in the trap, they said; it remained now for Quante to spring the catch and make him fast.

The Mayor was scared; Quante could see that. But the Mayor was no different than the rest of the town. Even these men who had answered Quante's call for volunteers had done so only because they were terrorized, and hoped to protect themselves and their families at home.

Darkness was settling over the scene, but searchlights and torches had been provided. These gave sufficient illumination so that the prey could not slip away under cover of the oncoming night. The armed cordon was still maintained, and the men were still hopeful.

Quante and his chemist had had their heads together for some time, and a conclusion had at last been reached.

"We've hesitated to use poison in the water for some time," Quante said, "because of the possible danger to the entire population later. But we'll have to chance it now. We've spent nearly a whole day already, and time is getting short."

POISON! Slowly the word filtered through the ranks of Quante's army, and slowly their faces lit up with this new hope. They had tried before, but they had been unfortunate. They would not be cheated of their quarry this time, of that they were certain.

The experiment with the dye had told them one thing; the liquid man was in the reservoir, and he could not escape. But the very proximity of the creature made them uneasy. In a little more than two days Ferdinand Silva had become a legend in Graytown, a cruel and ruthless power of evil and destruction. The fame of his strength and cunning, that amounted almost to invincibility, had spread to every citizen.

Now, although he was trapped, he was still to be feared. He had demonstrated that already, in the two attempts that had been made to kill him. Both of these attempts had failed, because the liquid man had been stronger than his enemies. It was on Quante's new idea, the idea of using poison, that they now pinned all their desperate hopes. The water could be purified later.

The searchlights and torches that had been brought gave fair illumination to the scene, but because of the large area of the reservoir, there were still spots that were not too well lighted. The men who patrolled these places became uneasy with the first descent of darkness, and started at every shadow. The guns with which they were armed afforded them slight comfort. They had been on guard since early in the afternoon; the strain began to show, they were haggard and jittery. One hope yet remained to them, the hope in Quante and the poison. If that failed —but it could not fail!

Quante was doing his best to insure the success of the project. After careful and studied thought they decided upon the type of poison to be used, a poison that would attack body tissues, that would not have to be breathed in to do its damage. With the two previous experiments, they had learned more and more of the liquid man's powers of resistance, had learned of the best methods of attack. The police chemist assured Quante that the poison could not fail.

They collected a great quantity of it, all that could be procured.

"We have enough here to kill five hundred men," the chemist said cheerfully.

Quante was nervous and not too confident. There was too much at stake now for confidence. Human lives were

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at stake, every soul in Graytown. And then there was Priscilla! Quante could not help thinking about her. It was strange that during all this, the most difficult task he had ever faced, that he could think of Priscilla. But her face haunted him, and it was the inspiration of her that drove him now to every effort of which he was capable.

Before midnight the final preparations had been completed. The State Troopers and the coppers stationed on the wall, and the tight circle of armed civilians that surrounded the reservoir a few feet beyond, all maintained a frightened, hopeful silence. The artificial light gleamed dismally on their perspiring, white faces. All eyes were hard upon the chemist as he poured the ugly fluid from his bottles into the still waters of the reservoir.

The job was done! The chemist stood back, breathing heavily; all the bottles were empty. Then began the death-watch!

THOSE who were at the Maple Street reservoir that night never forgot the experience. All the searchlights and torches in the world could not have made the place cheerful. It seemed that all the forces of nature were pitted against this desperate little group. The sky, which had been clear all day, was clouding up again now, hiding the firmament. Outside the little area of light about the reservoir there was impenetrable darkness, and the gloom of it seemed to press in, as if trying to extinguish the light.

A wind had begun to blow, stirring the grass and the trees, which made horrible little rustlings that further served to jangle the nerves of the watchers. It sent tiny ripples across the surface of the pool too.

What was happening beneath that troubled surface those who kept close observation could not tell. They could only hope. Was the liquid man in his death throes somewhere in those awful depths? No one could say. Or was he impervious to the witches' potion they had brewed for him?

It seemed also that the wind had brought with it a light fog. Small wisps of this vapor were scudding across the water, clouding the torches and the flood-lamps. The whole scene began to grow dim, more obscure. Even the most Spartan spirits among those men became depressed. Would the liquid man, feeling the effects of the poison upon his body, and perceiving that the forces of the night were coming to his aid, try to escape now? What would they do should that come to pass? Would their bullets stop him?

The early hours of the morning were ones filled with horror. The imaginations of the watchers played tricks on them. Shadows stalked about the vicinity of the reservoir, and each shadow seemed a thing of evil. Only supreme control of the will, fighting against nerves on edge, prevented the men from firing on these creatures of darkness. The fog-laden air was alive with whisperings, each whisper breathing a threat. Around the faces of watches and clocks the hands crawled with snail-like pace. Each minute that ticked away was another eternity.

Dawn, a sickly gray dawn, came at last, and with it the wind died down. The evil powers of the night were dispersed. Morale, which had sunk to the point of despair, rose with the coming of the new day.

Quante, sleepless and heavy-eyed, welcomed it with genuine relief and high hopes. With the dying of the wind, the surface of the pool had become calm. Not a ripple disturbed the placid surface. On perceiving this, Quante's hopes leaped still higher.

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"Do you think we've succeeded?" The question was on every tongue.

Frankly, Quante did not know. But just then, ironically, as if to answer the question, there was a noticeable disturbance out in the middle of the reservoir. Indeed, it might have resembled a small whirlpool. They watched it, fascinated, as the realization came to them. The liquid man was cavorting playfully out there, to show them that he had survived their worst attack. He was mocking them!

"How do you suppose he kept alive?" Quante asked in bewilderment.

"We didn't have enough of the poison," the chemist said dismally. "The water must have diluted it sufficiently to give it little or no effect on the liquid man."

QUANTE witnessed that scene in utter despondency. What remained for them to do? If the liquid man escaped now from the reservoir, he would stop at nothing, and nothing could stop him.

In the midst of Quante's dejection, Randall approached him again.

"We still have almost a whole day before the water supply gives out," said the man in the leather jacket. "It might be that we have enough time to steam the water away!"

"What would we use?"

"Blow-torches!"

Quante stared. B l o w - t o r c h e s! Steaming away all of the water in the reservoir until—until at last the liquid man would be left all alone, at the bottom of the reservoir. Just a small puddle would remain, and that puddle would be Ferdinand Silva. They would have him then!

"It's our last hope," Quante said grimly.

Preparations were speeded immediately. Every blow-torch in and around Graytown was to be brought. In the meantime Quante gave his instructions. They were simply to play the acetylene flames upon the surface of the water, so that the water would be heated and come off in the form of steam. Somehow the idea struck the imaginations of those men; they were eager to begin.

But it was noon before the task was gotten under way. To handle every available torch Quante placed a man upon the wall, so that finally there was a complete circle of them, anxious and ready. The torches were lighted, and dozens of long streaks of orange flame were prepared to go into action. The signal came at last, and simultaneously those flames were brought to bear upon the surface of the pool.

On the instant there was a great hissing, and huge clouds of steam, boiling up as from a gigantic kettle, arose from the water. A muffled cheer sounded from the watchers.

Quante wasn't on the reservoir wall at the moment. Instead he was organizing his armed guards in the outside circle. He was certain now that the liquid man would see that he was trapped, and would make a desperate attempt to escape. These machine guns and rifles would stop him if the flames of the blow-torches didn't.

But something unlooked for was already happening. Steam was arising from the water in enormous quantities, so that the men who wielded the torches were almost obscured from sight in the midst of it. To the amazement of the spectators those dim figures atop the wall were acting strangely.

They seemed to be stumbling around blindly, clutching at their throats and chests. The sound of their coughs and gaspings could be heard even above the hissing of the steam. Streaks of flame from the blow-torches were whirling madly out of control as those who held

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them staggered and even fell. Screams of pain and terror came out of that great gloomy abyss of steam.

"Stop it! Hold those torches!" Quante yelled from where he stood.

The command was unnecessary. Already the torches were out of action. Some had dropped to the ground, others into the water, where they were extinguished. The men who had been using them were still upon the wall, some on hands and knees, but most of them lying prone, choking, with their hands flailing the air. The hissing of the rising steam had ceased, and the steam itself was rolling away.

"What the devil happened?" Quante wanted to know.

The answer came soon. They were dragging those poor, unfortunate wretches off the wall, and had them lying on the ground. The police chemist was examining one of these victims, and Quante went over. The chemist's face was as white as chalk, and stark horror stared from his eyes. Quante looked at the man lying upon the ground. The fellow's face and arms were unnaturally red, and he seemed almost unable to breathe.

"Remember the poison we put in the water?" the chemist said in a scared voice. "It was supposed to attack body tissues. It must have evaporated off with the steam, and became a poison gas! We caught ourselves in the trap we prepared for the liquid man!"

CHAPTER V

At Large Again!

THEY were licked. Quante felt helpless now. Seemingly they had done everything possible, and had failed. He thought again of Priscilla, poor, lovely Priscilla. He must carry on the fight for her sake.

The men who had been gassed would live, he was told. Luckily, they had not been subjected to the effects of the poison gas for a long enough time for it to have proven fatal. For this Quante was thankful.

"I wonder how many gas masks and rubberized, air-tight suits we can get in Graytown," he asked Randall. Quante was a wild man now; would try anything.

"Surely not more than half a dozen," came the answer.

"Then we'll get them," Quante decided.

Their combined efforts uncovered four diver's suits, and this was the only equipment that Graytown possessed that would suit the purpose.

The suits didn't arrive until four in the afternoon; in twelve hours their time would be up. Randall already reported that the water supply in the standpipes was running low. They would have to work fast. Quante took no chances this time. He himself took one of the suits, and Ryan another. Gower, the father of the little girl the liquid man had murdered, asked for the third. The fourth went to a big cop whom Quante especially trusted.

They were ghostly looking figures in that ungainly dress, as they held flaming blow-torches in their hands. When all was ready, Quante waved the rest of his men back, out of the reach of the gas-laden steam. Then they went to work.

It was a ticklish business. Quante was perspiring inside his steel, air-tight helmet. Ryan was on one side of him, and Gower on the other, but he could hardly see them as the steam came rolling up. The flames seemed to eat up the water with a vengeance, but Quante wondered whether only four torches could do the job in time.

Quante's lip curled as he sent the

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streak of flame from his torch biting into the water of the reservoir. The steam that came up fogged the glass windows in the helmet and he had to keep wiping it off. By the time they had been working a few minutes the vapor about them was so dense that they could scarcely see the surface of the pool. But they kept at it.

Night came on, but Quante hardly noticed that the searchlights were turned on. He could see nothing but the flame of his own torch and the billows of steam hissing up at him. But in his mind he saw the face of Priscilla as she urged him on.

It was sometime after dusk—Quante didn't know just exactly—when it happened. Big Ryan was on his left, only a few feet away. But even at that small distance, Quante didn't see the thing clearly.

It seemed, however, that something leaped out of the water. It all occurred within the space of a second. The thing avoided the licking flames, and instead grabbed at the hand that held the torch. They never knew whether Ryan screamed or not, but if he did, the scream was muffled within his steel helmet. The thing that appeared so suddenly up out of the pool, half hidden by the dense clouds of steam, had grasped Ryan's extended arm.

The struggle was brief. Before Quante could move, Ryan, torch and all, was dragged off the wall and into the reservoir.

"Ryan!" Quante's yell echoed hollowly within his own steel helmet.

BUT Ryan was gone. His torch sputtered out in the water. Quante waited a moment for the steam to clear away, hoping that Ryan's diving suit would save him in that water.

It was not until some minutes later that Quante got a clear view of the scene. By that time Ryan's heavily-weighted body was at the bottom of the pool; his helmet had been loosened and the water had poured in.

Helpless and sick at heart, Quante simply stood stock still upon the wall. The work had ceased. So sudden and unexpected had been the attack that they were almost paralyzed. Nothing so far had unnerved Quante quite like this; to have a man die at his very elbow. The cold sweat stood in great beads upon his brow, and his blood was as ice in his veins.

Since the steam together with its deadly gas had cleared away, a man came running along the wall. It was Randall and he seemed excited. There was a delay while between them they took off Quante's helmet.

"Look over there," Randall said, the instant Quante was able to hear him.

Quante's gaze followed the other's pointing finger. All along the northern horizon, very clear and distinct, was a dull red glow.

"What the devil is that?" Quante asked, not yet understanding.

"It's a fire," Randall answered grimly. "The Mayor's on the phone about it now. You'd better talk to him."

Not waiting to take off the rest of the diver's outfit, Quante went to the telephone. It was the Mayor all right, and he had never heard the official quite so excited.

"Lieutenant," came the panting voice over the wire, "there's a fire in the warehouse district. Lioski's old chemical factory. It's out of control and spreading. The trouble is that there is no pressure in the water system. The firemen are having a hard time."

Quante couldn't answer for a moment; he was thinking too hard. Lioski's laboratory on fire! Too strange for coincidence.

"You'll have to open the reservoir

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and let the water through," continued the Mayor's voice. "We can't get any pressure for the fire hose. We need water."

"But listen." Quante had found his voice at last. "We only need a few more hours here and we'll have him. I'm confident of it. To the devil with the fire. I know the fire is dangerous, but we've got something more dangerous here. Give us a few more hours."

"Don't talk back to me, Quante." The Mayor was angry, impatient. "The warehouse district is going fast, and the fire is headed downtown."

"Do the best you can with the fire," Quante pleaded, "until we finish off Silva out here. If we open the reservoir now, Silva will escape through the pipes."

"Listen, you numbskull cop. The fire has eaten up two blocks already, and it won't stop until it takes every stick in Graytown. I'll take the responsibility, Quante. Do as I say. Open the reservoir and let the water through!"

Quante banged down the receiver, and gave the necessary orders. In despair, he watched them being obeyed.

"There's something funny about this" he told Randall. "Lioski's laboratory being on fire at a time like this. Something very funny."

QUANTE was right; there was something queer about that fire. They found evidence of it the next morning searching among the ruins.

"The fire was started," Quante explained to the Commissioner, "by the explosion of a time-bomb, a time-bomb undoubtedly set by Ferdinand Silva. He probably set it the same night that he killed Lioski. All the secrets of his experiments were in that building, and I guess he didn't want anyone else to profit by them.

"That's why he was playing for time in the reservoir. He knew what time the explosion would occur, and he knew that we would need water to fight the fire. When we trapped him, he must have suddenly remembered the time-bomb he had set, and knew that if he delayed us long enough, the explosion and the fire would force us to open the gates so that he could escape. That's why he was so confident. I even believe that he was toying with us, and actually enjoyed the combat. If it hadn't been for the fire, we might have had him by this time, but the fire saved him."

The Commissioner looked gloomy.

"But that isn't all," Quante added. "The reign of terror will begin again where it left off when we caught the liquid man in the reservoir."

QUANTE was right again. The reign of terror had started already. And it started in quite a different section of town, a section of exclusive apartment buildings. The exact place, in fact, was an apartment on the first floor, belonging to Barbara Storey.

Barbara Storey was a beautiful creature. Her hair was of a reddish-golden tint, and her eyes were blue. Her skin had a smoothness that was enticing, and there were dimples in her cheeks. Her figure was of the sort that men turn to look and stare at in the street.

She had but an hour ago arrived in town. She knew of the fire, and had heard vague rumors of the legendary liquid man. She was unpacking her suitcases when a knock sounded at the door. Reggie, most likely. She brushed back her red-gold hair, and rushed to answer it.

"Reggie, how did you know—?"

She stopped suddenly. It wasn't Reggie. A strange looking visitor it was, like a man, yet not a man. Of a dark,

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cloudy color, transparent almost. She could see the light in the hallway shining through it. Before she could slam the door, the stranger had stepped inside, and closed it for himself.

"Don't scream," he admonished. "You won't be hurt. Sit down."

She was too scared to do anything else. She sat down. The strange creature remained standing. Barbara Storey could see him plainly now. There was a head on those glistening shoulders, but no eyes were in the head, no mouth, utterly without features. Like a dark blob of water that head was.

"I am Ferdinand Silva." The voice did not come from any visible place, rather emanated from the depths of the strange thing. Barbara Storey gripped the arms of her chair, and wondered if she were dreaming.

"I have come here for two reasons," he went on. "First, because I've seen that you are very beautiful." There was something sinister in the statement, and the girl's terror rose.

"Second, because you do not know about me, because you have not heard the false stories they have told about me. As you see, I am not like other men. I am liquid.

"Being liquid, I have great powers, greater than any other man. For almost two days they had me trapped in the reservoir, but all the weapons they could bring against me were of no avail. I have the world at my feet, power unlimited. Nothing is impossible to me. I have untold riches at my elbow. I can make you a queen!"

"Me? What do you mean?" She was thoroughly frightened now.

"As I said, you are very beautiful, and I want you. And, beautiful lady, I can get what I want."

"You mean—?" It was all a bad dream.

"I mean that I want you to be my wife. A queen! I'll give you everything that you could desire, jewels, furs, position, wealth! Think of it! The wife of the most powerful man on earth!

"YOU see, although I have a strange appearance, I am human. I have the desires and the weaknesses of humanity, even though I am above humanity in the scale of life. You are very beautiful, and I want a mate!

"Is that so strange? I am lonely. A human being cannot live alone and be happy. Power is not everything. One must have love. If you will come with me, to comfort my loneliness, I shall make you happy. The world shall be yours. Please say that you will, and make a poor, desolate, lonely man happy once more." If he had been anything else but what he was, she would have pitied him. "Come with me, love me, and rule the world with me!"

"You're crazy, that's what you are!" the girl answered him in a voice that was close to a scream. "You filthy beast, I'd rather die!"

"That you may have the privilege of doing, if you refuse," the creature said calmly, and without moving. "If you will not come with me willing, I shall force you to come."

Barbara Storey turned pale. There had been something in that low voice that was relentlessly serious and full of meaning. What tenderness there had been in his manner previously had now completely vanished.

"Thus," Ferdinand Silva continued, "you have a choice. Being a wife to me, or food for the worms."

"I won't do it! I'll die first!"

The liquid man moved toward her, grasped her by the arms as she tried to escape. It was useless for her to struggle, her arms were pinioned to her sides. The thing was close to her. She

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could feel the wet sliminess of it, and she felt a great horror, a repulsiveness.

"A queen or death!" it hissed at her. "Ermine robes or a cold grave!"

"You slimy, detestable thing, let me go!" Her throat was dry, she could hardly rasp the words. "You ugly reptile that dares to call yourself a man. You're not a man. You're an unclean horror that shouldn't be let live! A detestable, filthy puddle of water!"

If the thing had been struck, it could not have recoiled more violently. Suddenly it released its hold upon the girl. But she continued to stand there, making no movement, hypnotized with terror.

The liquid man glided over the rug, slowly, as if a great burden were upon his back. He halted at last before a mirror, and glanced in it. For a long moment he gazed.

"A puddle of water," he repeated, and the voice seemed to have lost something of its steely tone.

Slowly, the liquid hands began to move, as the thing commenced to feel its head. The hands glided over the places where there should have been eyes, nose, mouth.

"I am strange," the creature said, as if to itself. "I have no eyes, it seems, but yet I see. I have no mouth, but yet I speak. And this pale substance of my body, it is flesh, truly it is. A puddle of water, no! I am more than that. I am human, you see. I am a man!"

He turned once more to the girl.

"I am a man!" he repeated. "Do you not see that I am a man? What can I do to convince you of my humanity?"

Her terror was so great that she did not know what she was saying. She could only repeat what she had said before.

"You're not a man," she said, trying to swallow her fright. She perceived the slow darkening of color in the creature, but little did she know what that meant. "You're further from a human being than the lowest beast!"

As she spoke, the color of the creature grew continually blacker. Black, the color of death. It uttered not another word, but instead gathered itself for a spring.

The liquid man killed her entirely without feeling. When he left the apartment, he knew that the die was cast. The bitterness welled up in his warped brain, and the last vestige of humanity seeped out. He did not even take a last look at the pitiful body on the floor.

"THAT'S the third victim of last night," Quante muttered as he looked down at the corpse of Barbara Storey.

There was nothing to do there. Mere routine. Quante went back to the station. He stopped for a moment to chat with Priscilla. Despite the obvious threat to her life, the girl was still maintaining her courage. Quante could not help admiring the pluck she was showing.

He knew now that he was in love with her, but he couldn't tell her. If both of them lived through this, he would tell her. Right now anything he might say would sound so futile.

He left her at last, reluctantly, and went into the Commissioner's office. The Mayor and the Captain of the State Troopers were there too. All wore dismal looks.

The Mayor spoke. "What can we do? You've already done all that you can. We're not blaming you, Lieutenant. You've done a fine job."

Quante bit his lip. That was poor consolation, a fine job! This eternal fighting against odds, fighting a losing fight. They were beaten right now, but he had to keep fighting, somehow. Every

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life that he could save would be a victory. Each report that told of yet another victim amounted to another defeat.

Those people of Graytown, Quante pitied them. They were so helpless, so dependent on the police for protection, and the police could give so little. Quante could only remember seeing frightened faces in the windows of houses as they passed, the empty streets, the deathlike stillness that enwrapped the entire town.

The Captain of the Troopers was having an argument with the Commissioner. Quante sat down, hardly heeding their wrangling. The Captain was a hot-tempered man, and he was perspiring freely now, even in the chill atmosphere of the police station.

After some time he excused himself for a moment, saying that he was thirsty. No one paid him any heed; the Commissioner even turned away his attention to the telephone reports. The Captain went out into the hall, over to the water fountain.

He turned the handle, pressed his hot face down to drink. Unthinking!

A wet stream darted up from the fountain like a snake uncoiling. Quick to the man's throat it went, and the Captain of the Troopers fell to the floor with his arms flailing. Swiftly the thing drew its entire length out of the water pipe, flung itself on its victim.

It was a one-sided struggle, over almost before it began. Within five seconds the Captain's body lay prone and lifeless on the floor.

Not until some minutes later did Quante, uneasy in his subconscious mind, come out of the Commissioner's office and discover the corpse. Instantly the alarm was raised; men came running down the shadowy halls and corridors.

It was then that something else was discovered. The ring of master keys was missing. With a sudden flash of understanding Quante rushed to the women's division. The door to that corridor was locked. Like a locomotive, the realization hit him. Priscilla!

Kept at bay by the iron bars, Quante piled out the front door, around the building. The streets were empty; not a human being was in sight. Priscilla was gone, gone, with Ferdinand Silva!

THE period of waiting, waiting for something to break, waiting for some clue to turn up as to the whereabouts of Priscilla, was the most hellish experience of Quante's life. It had been five days since the first appearance of the liquid man in Graytown, and during that time Quante had snatched but a few scant hours of sleep. Now, haggard and all but completely done in, he faced this new tragedy.

Never in his life had he felt so helpless. The fact that the liquid man had carried Priscilla off somewhere rather than wreaking his vengeance immediately on the spot where he found her, gave Quante some slight hope. No, he did not delude himself with thinking that Silva intended other than vengeance. But yet, until the worst came, Quante persisted in hoping.

The town was being combed, but with the small force at his disposal he could not do the job effectively. He had no idea where Silva might have gone, what his plans might be. Although Quante had to act blindly, he nevertheless was forced to act quickly.

It was raining again; the sky was lead-gray. On every roof could be heard the steady, maddening tattoo of the unceasing downpour. Ever-widening pools stood in the wet streets and on the soggy ground. Quante wasn't cheerful as he surveyed the situation.

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In this sort of weather the liquid man could move about almost as he pleased, unseen, for the rain was his greatest ally.

Time passed, and no word came. As each second ticked away, Quante's hopes grew dimmer, and the utter madness of despair descended upon him.

HAD Quante known it—but he couldn't have known it—Priscilla was but a few blocks away, in a drugstore on South Pine. Silva had brought her there immediately after the abduction, had bound her securely, and left her lying helpless on the floor.

To say that she was terror-stricken would have been an understatement. Long had she known that she was in danger, that the liquid man might return for her at any time. Now, when the possibility had become reality, she shuddered at her fate.

Yet somehow she retained enough courage to keep from swooning as she lay there and watched the liquid man. She knew now why he had chosen a drugstore as a refuge, for he meant to use some of the things that were on its shelves. The store had been temporarily abandoned by its owner during the recent reign of terror in the town, and the liquid man had free access to its contents.

He was doing something, just what she did not know. He had a small fire burning, and over it he had placed a flask, in which some green fluid was now bubbling and frothing. A long table had been cleared, and was now littered with all manner of curious things, bottles and powders, and papers full of scrawled figures.

Silva himself was working at the table, absorbed with his task, scarcely paying any attention to his fair prisoner. He had already been at it for some hours, but still he labored tirelessly. He had assumed somewhat the figure of a man, with head and arms, and as he performed some delicate operation with his chemicals, she even saw the liquid fingers at work. What a surgeon Ferdinand Silva could have been with fingers such as those!

QUITE like some ancient, medieval alchemist he looked now, toiling in his dungeon laboratory at some long-hidden and mysterious secret. The green vapor that arose from the fluid that was heating over the fire clouded the room like an exotic incense burning for some evil god. Through that green smoke Silva glided back and forth with his curious gait. Occasionally he stopped to sprinkle a certain powder in the flask, and when he did the green vapor curled higher.

At length he ceased his work and appeared out of the haze, coming toward her. As he approached Priscilla's terror rose, and only the rag stuffed in her mouth prevented her from screaming. But he stopped near her, and for the moment at least intended her no apparent harm.

"I feel that I should tell you what I am doing," said the liquid man, pointing to the table at which he had been working. It was the first time he had spoken to her.

"You see," he went on, in his foreign-sounding voice, "I can never return to become an ordinary human being. Lioski, that soul-less little wretch, hid that formula from me, and doomed me forever to remain as I am now. But that is past now; what is done cannot be undone. There remains only to make the best of it.

"I have found, however, that this life is unbearable. My position is the same as that of a shipwrecked sailor on a desert island, absolutely alone, without the companionship of any creature

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of his own kind. It has been an agony that I cannot allow to go on.

"Humanity spurns me, hates me, fears me. I have tried to make peace with them, if not with the whole of humanity, at least with individuals. Yes, I have tried. But it has been useless. They look at me and can only stare with fear, as you are staring now, Priscilla Towers. They imagine me to be a beast, something inhuman. But they are wrong. I am human, very human.

"There remains but one thing to do. I still have that formula which I used on my own body that night, that fateful night, in Lioski's laboratory five days ago. How long it seems now! I have found here the means of using that formula.

"The liquid man must have a mate. I have chosen you, Priscilla Towers. In a few minutes I shall use my formula upon you; you shall become liquid as I am, and then I shall no longer be lonely!"

CHAPTER VI

A Matter of Temperature . . .

FERDINAND SILVA seemed to be watching her with pleasure as he made that announcement. The effect of it showed plainly on her white face and in her eyes. If she had been terrified before, she was more than that now. Although she had always retained some hope that Quante would find her, she had really expected to die. But this—to become the mate of the liquid man, of the same slimy, wet substance as he—that was to live and to die many times over.

"I see that you do not relish the idea," Silva said, pure malice in his voice. "I had an idea that you would not. Do you not envy me my unlimited power? No, I see that you do not. That is my second reason for doing what I am about to do. You have my experience to assure you that becoming liquid is the worst fate that can befall a person. But you escaped me once. You are the only one who ever succeeded in doing that. For that blow to my pride, you must pay, pay in the way that I choose. I choose for you the fate of becoming one of my kind. Since you are a woman, you cannot become more powerful than I am.

"But you will become an outcast, and being lonely you will seek comfort and safety with me. They will chase you as they have me; they will hound you to the ends of the earth, will never allow you to rest. Do you see now what it means to be like me?"

He laughed. It was the laugh of a fiend, of a human creature gone mad. His whole wet, glistening body shivered as he laughed.

"I am going to drug you first," he continued at last, producing a hypodermic needle. "You see, the process of becoming liquid is extremely painful. I am not sparing you the pain because I am kind. It is because you are a woman and frail, and could not survive the ordeal without the aid of this drug. I cannot allow you to die now. No, what I have in store for you is far worse."

She thought that he was going to administer the drug then, but she was wrong.

"I am not quite ready," he explained, gloating. "Be patient."

He went back to his work, back to that flask with the strange green, boiling fluid. The green haze hid him once more, and she was glad to be rid of his evil presence.

All that night he worked at his curious task, all that night while the rain beat dismally on the roof and the wind whistled around the corners of the build-

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ing. It was damp and chilly for Priscilla as she lay there on the floor, but she hardly noticed it. Her mind was filled with her own despairing thoughts, thoughts of her doom when that green fluid in the flask was ready.

The liquid man had switched on the radio in order to hear the frequent police broadcasts, so that he might keep in touch with the movements of his enemies. Priscilla listened to it hopefully. She heard the warnings that came every half hour, warnings for the people to remain indoors, to report any suspicious occurrence. She heard them tell of a reward for Silva's capture; heard too of her own abduction, her description, of the hunt that was being made for her.

Well could she imagine what Ferdinand Silva's thoughts must be as he heard those broadcasts. How puny were the efforts of the police to capture him. How powerful and invincible he was.

IT was very near dawn when the fateful broadcast came through. It was merely a broadcast of the weather conditions, and began very innocently.

"The skies are expected to clear this morning," the radio voice said. "The wind has shifted to the north, and colder weather is expected as the wind shifts. Temperatures will likely fall several degrees below freezing . . ."

As those words came out over the ether, there came a sudden crash of breaking glass from back where Silva had been working. Silva himself came striding out, to stand in front of the radio. He was listening hard, and a tenseness seemed to grow thoughout his whole liquid body. Curses in a foreign language came from him, although no lips opened to form the words. For seconds he stood unmoving.

Then with unbelievable speed he disappeared back into the green haze out of which he had come. Priscilla heard the breaking of glass and the crash of a table being overturned. She saw a gleam as it seemed some papers were being burned, and simultaneously she heard more of Silva's curses knife the air. Then silence.

For a long time she lay there on the floor, not daring to move. The green smoke was drifting away, and soon she began to see more clearly beyond it. All that met her gaze was a heap of broken glass and charred papers, the overturned table and a litter of debris. The liquid man was not there. He had gone! In his haste he had completely forgotten her!

Priscilla waited no longer. She tore at the cords that bound her wrists, discovered that they would yield only slightly. That would never do. But there was a telephone on the counter. Paying no heed to bruises and bumps she rolled over, somehow managed to pull down the telephone by its wires. The receiver came off, and with the point of her chin she clicked the instrument. She heard the operator's voice over the wire, but the rag in her mouth prevented her from answering. Nevertheless, she continued to click the thing, hoping that the operator would summon Quante, and that Quante would understand.

LUCKILY, Quante was at the station when the call came from the telephone exchange.

"There's a call from a drugstore on South Pine," the operator said. "The wire is open, but no one answers."

Mad thoughts began to whirl through Quante's mind. That trick had been played before! Priscilla!

"Yeah? South Pine. I got it."

In an instant Quante was out through the door. His squad car screamed

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through the streets at a dangerous pace. He had the siren going now, making no secret of his presence. The drugstore on South Pine before long loomed ahead of the onrushing car. Quante braked to a stop, slid out. For a moment the door resisted, but with a hurried heave of his shoulder, there was a splintering of wood and he was inside.

Priscilla was on the floor, bound and gagged. Quickly and with dexterity he freed her.

"He's gone," she said half hysterically, and put her head on his shoulder.

For a long moment she lay in his arms, while he soothed her fears. Then, when at last the sobs that racked her body ceased, he stooped and kissed her, gently.

Then, just as gently, he commenced to question her. Perhaps she held the secret that would spring the trap, the trap that would close its sharp jaws forever on Ferdinand Silva. Gradually, she told him her story.

"And what did you hear on the radio just before Silva left?" he asked patiently, when she had finished.

"The weather report."

Quante frowned.

"What did it say?"

"Something about colder weather. Below freezing."

Quante trembled despite himself.

"Priscilla, my darling, you've done it," he told her in a voice from which he could not keep the excitement. "No wonder the liquid man left here in a hurry. If colder weather comes, he's likely to freeze. He's likely to find himself a cake of ice! But there's no time to lose now!"

He gave his orders and organized his attack from the telephone in that drugstore on South Pine. That required perhaps a quarter of an hour, and by that time guards had arrived to care for Priscilla.

The sun was well up when Quante returned to the squad car, piled in, and set the siren shrilling. The machine raced down the street, took corners on two wheels. He didn't stop until he had reached the railroad yards, but some cars had already arrived ahead of him.

A score of Quante's bluecoats were on hand, together with the half dozen State Troopers and some of the men who had volunteered at the reservoir. They had brought too the same acetylene blowtorches that had been used on that occasion. While the rest of his force was arriving, Quante hurried to inspect the train yards.

"How soon will the next south-bound freight train leave?" he asked one of the yard men.

"In less than an hour," the man said, after he had viewed Quante's badge.

"That will give us plenty of time," Quante commented.

MEANWHILE the Commissioner himself had arrived, in answer to the lieutenant's call. Quante explained briefly.

"The weather is getting colder," he said, "and the liquid man believes that if he stays in Graytown he will be frozen. Therefore he has to leave this part of the country quick. The only conveyances in and out of Graytown, since we've given the order, are the railroads. That's what he will have to use. He's got to get to a warmer climate, so he'll have to head south. It's my hunch that he's somewhere around here right now, waiting for a train that will be going in that direction. And there's one leaving in less than an hour."

Already it was getting colder. Quante could feel it. The wind had changed to the north, and was sweeping down in heavy gusts, bringing the chill air with it. Quante glanced at a thermom-

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eter; the mercury was hovering very close to the freezing point.

The rest of the police force and the volunteers were arriving little by little. Quante sent out scouts to comb the yards.

"If you see him," he ordered, "don't try to handle him yourself. Just yell, and that will bring the rest of us."

Quante had assembled quite a group of men, and each was armed with a torch.

"The liquid man will be afraid of fire," he told these men to give them confidence. "Your blow-torch will be your protection."

Even as he spoke a yell came from a part of the yards where some freight cars were idled on the tracks. Instantly there was a frenzied melee as Quante's little army swung into action. The flames of their acetylene torches being whipped by the wind, these men sped to the spot from which the cry had come. But they kept together; there were none of them excessively brave.

They came upon Ferdinand Silva at last in an open section of track behind the string of freight cars. The instant they saw him, they halted, shrinking and hesitant. Quante didn't wait to urge them on.

"Spread out!" The words cracked out loudly, words to be obeyed. "Surround him in a circle. Keep your torches in front of you."

They followed instructions quickly, but the circle was wide and thin, for none approached very near. The liquid man seemed bewildered by this sudden attack, for he made no immediate movement. His enemies were all about him, in every direction, and he did not know where to counter-attack. He hesitated just long enough to give Quante's men time enough to complete the encirclement.

But Silva's amazement was no greater than that of these men, as testified to by the stupefied, awed looks upon their faces. Although they had had a previous encounter with the liquid man in the reservoir, this was the first time they had actually seen him.

Silva was standing erect, preserving somewhat the shape of a human being, and this lent well to the surprise with which they beheld him. The texture of his body was no longer transparent, but dark and muddied, and the wet surface of it reflected the glow of the acetylene flames.

He was making small zig-zag movements, first in one direction, then in another, but always as he faced about, some portion of the circle was confronting him with a wall of fire. Encouraged finally by the liquid man's comparative inaction and by Quante's shouted orders the circle closed in tighter. But beyond a certain point they would not go; their fear of Ferdinand Silva, built up during the past six days, was too great.

MEANWHILE, the wind was whistling viciously out of the north, whipping the flames of the torches. Quante felt the chill of that wind, and turned up his collar against it. The temperature must be dropping; subconsciously Quante knew it.

Ferdinand Silva knew it too. He was at bay. He wanted to escape the cold that he could feel creeping over his body, but the circle of flame surrounded him.

Quante was telling his men to prepare for an onslaught; the liquid man could not afford to hesitate long. Finally, in extreme desperation, Silva did go into action. In his curious gait, but with incredible speed, he rushed toward that section of the circle which appeared thinnest. Terror spurring their efforts, the men remained firm, standing their ground while the acetylene flames

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spread a protective curtain before them.

The liquid man did not advance far in the face of the fire. Just before he felt the hot stab of it, he recoiled hastily, retreating back to the center of the circle. It seemed now that he was moving about blindly, without purpose.

Quante, however, could guess what was the matter. The cold was gripping that liquid body, fogging that liquid brain. Silva had violated the laws of Nature, and now Nature herself was having her revenge.

Where before the liquid man had been restlessly pacing his flame-barred cage, he was now standing quite still. Not a movement could be detected throughout his entire body. His appearance seemed more human-like than ever before, for something that faintly resembled human features began to mark that globular head. But perhaps that was only a trick of the imagination.

How long that flaming circle maintained its horrible vigil, Quante did not know. All conception of time seemed to have been lost. They were witnessing a struggle between life and death, between the cunning of man and the jealous forces of Nature.

The texture of Ferdinand Silva's body seemed to be changing, slowly but inevitably. All of its transparency was gone; it no longer glistened like a wet surface. It seemed to have grown cloudy and murky. The liquid man was freezing!

The circle of men seemed to sense that the end was coming, and slowly they began to move in. They were close now, close enough to see the tiny writhings of the liquid body, and to hear the words that came almost inaudibly from the creature.

This time, as the liquid man spoke, they could see the movement of his lips. He seemed to be oblivious now of those who surrounded him.

"Violet!" he breathed. "Juan!"

Silva apparently was suffering great pain. Convulsions racked his body as the solidification process continued. He had taken on the appearance of clouded ice, and minute by minute the ice became thicker as the cold seized him. They could almost perceive the rise and fall of his icy breast as his breath came in tortured sobs. His body was readjusting itself, and the agony of it must have been intense.

The icy lips were moving again, and Quante would have given a great deal to hear the words that came from them. But the tones were too low to be heard. Perhaps they were not meant for human ears.

THE next thing that happened Quante would have stopped if he had known of it. But it occurred too suddenly for anyone to interfere. John Gower, the father of the little girl whom Silva had murdered, burst through the circle and ran toward the pitiful creature standing immobile in the center. In Gower's hand was a great, gleaming pick-axe.

There were cries from the circle as Gower swung the weapon. The liquid man did not, or could not, make any effort to avoid it. The point of the pick-axe plunged into the icy form, which reeled under the impact, and fell at last to the ground.

The icy thing didn't shatter. The pick-axe had plunged deep, had made a huge hole in what might have been the creature's chest. As they watched in amazement, from this hole, from somewhere in the interior of that snowy body, blood began to seep. Human blood, red and dark!

John Gower stood over the prostrate figure.

"There, you devil," he said between clenched teeth. "You have your due."

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Gower, half-crazy with the sight of his enemy's blood already spilt, might have aimed another blow, but Quante rushed in, pushed him aside, and stood between the vengeance-mad Gower and the fallen victim.

"Bring a doctor, someone," Quante shouted.

But it was already too late for a doctor. Quante spread his own coat partially over the creature, but it was too late to warm him.

Both in horror and in wonder, Quante watched that final transformation. The icy structure seemed to be disappearing, and in its place flesh began to appear. The features of the face were forming under the very eyes of the watchers.

Silva was still alive as this took place, but he would not live for long. Gower's pick-axe had done its work well, for from the gaping wound in Silva's chest the blood was flowing in a rich red stream.

The process which Silva had used to make himself a liquid man was now being reversed. The skull and bones had become visible, and over them were forming the muscles, the veins, and the flesh. Before their very eyes, a man was being made. But as the process continued, a man was dying. As he died, his form became complete, and they were gazing at a human being. It was almost incredible that the liquid terror and this expiring man were both Ferdinand Silva. His eyes were closed, but his lips still twitched slightly. The pain that had accompanied the transformation seemed to have gone now, for he lay quite still. Still at last!

When at last Ferdinand Silva ceased entirely to breathe, they looked down at him. A small, dark man, thin and hollow-cheeked, with a week's growth of beard upon his face! How small and weak he looked. The blood from the wound in his chest flashed red against the dark skin. John Gower had had his revenge. The liquid man was dead.

Back at the police station an hour later, Quante was notified that there was a call from the state capital.

"It's the Governor," the Commissioner said. "He wants to know what the devil's wrong here in Graytown, and he also wants to know if there's anything he can do to help."

"Is there?" Quante asked, turning to Priscilla.

"You're past all help now, darling," she told him. She was in his arms. He was helpless, but he liked it.

SCIENCE AND SABOTAGE

SCIENCE has made the task of saboteurs and spies easier in one sense and more difficult in another. All of the latest scientific developments are at their command; but on the other hand these same instruments are used by Federal authorities to catch these same crooks. So it seems that turnabout is fair play!

One of the most ingenious schemes to get information out of the country was recently uncovered only after the suspected spy had been searched for eight hours. Eventually it was discovered that he had printed his message in invisible ink on transparent paper and pasted this on the inside of his eyeglasses.

The intelligence department discovered it in the nick of time and they aren't saying how. Maybe Yehoudi helped them out.

THE BIG DITCH

THE Panama Canal is one of the greatest engineering feats which man has ever accomplished, but before we take too much credit for it, we should remember that it might have been constructed four hundred years sooner had it not been for a superstitious idea.

In the 17th century, Spain was the wealthiest and most powerful nation under the sun. Her engineers had investigated the plan of a canal across the Isthmus of Darien and found it feasible. Money was plentiful and Indian labor was available by the millions for the cost of feeding them. In all probability the dream would have become reality four hundred years ago had not the Archbishop of Madrid advised Philip the second that:

"What God hath joined together let no man tear asunder!"

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OSCAR Saves

by James Norman

An Indian uprising dangerous? While everybody laughed, Oscar used his sensitive nose, and it told him of an incredible danger to America...

SOMEONE in the crowd gasped as Hodar the Magician leveled his .32 revolver dead at my chest. Then Arizona sunlight flashed upon the barrel as the gun kicked up. A steel-jacketed bullet jarred against my body, rocked me a little and ricocheted harmlessly into the dry red dust.

"There's the proof," said Hodar. "The most incredible phenomenon in America today. Oscar, the little Martian detective, is absolutely bullet proof. Nothing less than an anti-tank shell can harm him. You just can't kill him. And Oscar is the only bona fide Martian on Earth. He came here accidentally and inexplicably—Yes, I pulled him from a top hat in one of my shows in New York. Scientists are still puzzling over his appearance."

Added gasps of astonishment came from the mixed group of cowboys and city folks who had come to the Sugar Creek Dude Ranch annual rodeo. A cowboy, hunched upon the top bar of the corral fence, squinted at me, then squirted a jet of brown tobacco juice at my feet, saying:

"Whall, I'll be dad gummed!"

I jerked myself to my full height of

Oscar swung down hard with the rifle, and the Indian went down with a yell of pain

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four feet five inches and strutted around, looking more dapper than ever. I guess to a cowboy I was a pretty surprising little fellow. I'm so stubby that if you haven't seen a penguin, you'd think I looked like a salt shaker—slim at the top, bunchy at the bottom.

My clothes are made of feathers; black tails, white vest and front, like an evening suit—and I can take them off. But right now, instead of wearing my usual Earth-made silk top hat, I sported a ten gallon sombrero that sort of sagged over my conical ears.

As usual, it was my nose that startled the lean, slow talking cowboy on the fence. It's tulip shaped with a pert sort of flare at the end resembling the horns used in a public address system. The rest of my face is ordinary save for the fact that my skin is an outrageous shade of salmon pink.

Normally I wouldn't be exhibiting myself in such a manner for I am a professional detective—the only Martian detective on Earth or Mars. Hodar and I had stopped at the Sugar Creek spread while touring the West and Tom Tabor, the owner, prevailed upon us to give an impromptu show.

The spectators around the corral were still somewhat dubious about our act. A squat gent packing iron-gray handlebar moustachios and a pair of .44's ambled alongside of Hodar, shaking his head doubtfully. He was Sheriff Stockton from Caxton town.

"Maybe thet were a fake slug in thet pint sized gun of yourn," he said to Hodar. "Mind if I try my own irons?"

Hodar nodded as the peace officer slid out his bone handled six shooter.

"Go to it," Hodar grinned. "Oscar eats lead. But take care that you don't hit his tulip nose. It's very delicate. Perhaps later on Oscar will tell you why his nose is so valuable."

Just then I had trouble with my nose. I had backed some thirty feet from the corral fence and stood stiffly, my extremely dense Martian skin prepared to take the hammering blow of the .44. Suddenly a horsefly landed on my nose —but that wasn't all!

From the corner of my eye I saw Sheriff Stockton finger the trigger of his gun. At the same instant the horsefly bit me. A split second later the lean cowboy sitting on the corral fence also went into action. His gun was out and roaring from the hip. A bullet zinged past my cheek, clipping off the fly as neatly as William Tell could split an apple.

SHERIFF STOCKTON whirled, his unfired six shooter held tensely in his fist. He stared suspiciously at the lean cowboy as the latter casually blew the smoke out of his gun barrel. Others in the corral stared at the towheaded sharpshooter in frank admiration.

"Who be you?" Stockton demanded.

The stranger glanced at the sheriff thoughtfully, his quick keen gray eyes measuring the law man.

"Some call me the Colorado Kid," he finally drawled. "That's cuz I come from up Colorado way. You're Stockton ain't you?"

The sheriff nodded.

"I been looking for you. Maybe you've got some information I'm wanting," said the Colorado Kid.

"Like w-w—"

A thin hissing sound cut across the corral—barely audible. The sheriff jerked stiffly. His body half turned; the six shooter dropped from his fingers. The unfinished question froze upon his lips as he crumbled to the earth and lay there face down. *A feathered arrow protruded stiffly from his back!*

A sharp intake of breath, then a gasp of bewildered shock swept through the small audience gathered in the corral.

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A woman near Hodar screamed and fainted. A half dozen punchers ran to the sheriff's side. The Colorado Kid yelled at one of them, "Git over to the barn and collar him that shot that arrow!" He punctuated the order with a swipe from his high heeled boot.

"Stand back!" Hodar shouted to the others. "Let Oscar handle this. The Sheriff has been murdered!"

Although there was a great deal of confusion in the corral, I soon succeeded in establishing a semblance of order. My experience in handling on-the-spot murder situations stood me in good stead.*

It was but a moment's work to withdraw the arrow from the murdered sheriff's back. I sniffed the barb with my sensitive tulip nose, carefully tabulating the odors. Then I felt my own flesh crawl because of what my nose told me.

"Poison!" I snapped. "Venom *crotali confluenti,* the venom of a prairie rattlesnake. It works in an instant. Much faster than the diamond or timber rattlesnake venom."

"Poisoned arrows!" Hodar cried. "Good God!"

Tom Tabor, the broad shouldered heavy jowled owner of the Sugar Creek Dude Ranch, grabbed the death arrow from my hand and examined it.

"Hopi Indians," Tabor grunted. "And they use prairie rattlers for their snake dance. The reservation isn't far from here . . . But I don't see Hopis bothering to pay off a grudge against Stockton with arrows when guns are so handy. Indians just don't use arrows anymore."

The puncher who had been sent off to search the ranch yard quickly returned. "Can't find nobody," he said.

"Tabor," I said, turning to the ranch owner, "See that no one leaves here until we clear this up."

I had barely given the order when the Colorado Kid whirled upon us, covering the corral with twin guns.

"Nobody's leaving but the Colorado Kid," he drawled. "I've got reasons."

He backed away toward the corral gate, his keen eyes watching every hand that itched toward a holster. In an instant he swung into the saddle of a jet black colt.

The horse suddenly reared, thrashing sunlight with his forelegs. Four iron shod feet hit the ground at once and the Kid and his jet black colt were high-tailing it in a cloud of red dust.

"Greco!" Tabor yelled at a swarthy Mexican hand near him, "Get after him —dead or alive!"

THERE was a sudden scream just as Greco galloped off after the Colorado Kid. I saw a slim, red-haired girl who wore western riding boots and spurs run across the corral, then suddenly stop before the body of Sheriff Stockton. She knelt there for an instant—stunned!

Tom Tabor placed his arm protectively around her shoulder and drew her away from the death scene.

"I'm sorry, Alice," he said gruffly. "There's nothing we can do now. Your father is dead. Brace up, kid."

The girl bit her lip, holding back her emotions. "But why—why did they kill dad?" she cried.

"We'll find out," said Tabor. The ranch owner turned to Hodar, saying, "Will you take Alice into the house. See that she's comfortable. I'll call you when Greco brings back the Colorado Kid."

I trailed Hodar and the girl into the ranch house and as we sat before the fireplace I was impressed with the fact

* "Oscar, Detective of Mars," FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, October 1940.—ED.

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that western girls are like no other women on Earth. Alice Stockton, pretty in an Earthian way, stood out in my eyes because of her straightforward courage and composure.

I overlooked the fact that her nose was straight instead of tulip shaped because her anger over the sheriff's death outshadowed such minor feminine shortcomings.

"Alice," I said, "Out there in the corral you seemed to think someone was after your father? You asked—*why did they kill him?* Why?"

The girl flashed me a blue eyed glance. "I know someone wanted to kill father."

"But who?" I asked.

"I don't know," Alice replied. "Dad has been acting strangely for the past week. He wasn't himself. Last Tuesday he found some mysterious papers but he wouldn't tell me what they contained. He was terribly secretive about them."

"You haven't got any idea at all about them?" Hodar interrupted.

The girl stared into the crackling fireplace. She shook her head helplessly.

"This morning Dad rode out to the Hopi Reservation. When he came back he was as white as a sheet, but he wouldn't tell me what was wrong. I could see that something terrible had happened because it takes a lot to scare Dad. He telegraphed the Governor to come to Caxton immediately."

"The Governor—" said Hodar.

"Yes," Alice answered. "And immediately afterward Dad saddled up and rode off to the Sugar Creek Dude Ranch. He said there might be somebody here he had to talk with."

I leaped out of my chair and began pacing the floor before the fireplace. A crime with complications such as this always excites my Martian nerves.

"Who was he to see?" I asked suddenly. "The Colorado Kid?"

Alice shook her head. "I don't know who he is."

"Tabor?" I asked.

"I'm not sure," said Alice.

"What do you know about Tabor? Greco? The others around here?" I demanded, pursuing another track.

"Tom Tabor—you don't think—" Alice looked shocked.

I dusted my feathered sleeve and shot the girl a reassuring glance.

"No. I think Tabor is all right. I sort of like him. Big bluff westerner."

"Tom Tabor has been a close friend of my father for years. He runs this dude ranch as a hobby because he likes to meet people from all different sections of the country. But he owns big cattle spreads all over Arizona," said Alice.

"And Greco?" I asked.

"He's just one of the hands. A Mexican. I don't like him but Dad and Tom Tabor trust him."

"Yes, maybe too much," I answered thoughtfully.

ALICE was on the verge of speaking again when suddenly I raced for the door. The sound of hoof beats rounding the barn and making toward the corral thundered in the dry air. I saw a party of three, the Colorado Kid, Greco and an Indian riding, as the westerners quaintly call it, hell bent for leather.

The Kid swung from his saddle and hurried toward Tom Tabor just as Hodar and I arrived upon the scene.

"Better git a guard posted," The Kid clipped. "Indian troubles."

"Indians!" Tabor answered incredibly. "You're crazy! Them Indians have been onto the reservation for nigh on thutty years. They ain't making no trouble."

The Colorado Kid's gray eyes seemed

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to harden into diamond points.

"Put them guards on," he spoke slowly and impressively. "The Indians have left the reservation. Not a one left there. *They've vanished!*"

"Vanished—!"

"Massacre too!" The Kid's voice hardened. "They've massacred all the government employees at the reservation! Not a one left alive."

CHAPTER II

Hodar the Killer

TABOR glanced sharply at the young Indian brave who had ridden in with the Colorado Kid and Greco. The young Indian looked excited, sharing the confusion that ran rampant in the ranch corral.

"What do you know about this?" Tabor demanded.

"I am Bill Running Wind," the Indian answered without dismounting from his pony. "I know nothing about massacre. All I know is that Sheriff Stockton soon be dead unless I come here."

"Dead!" Tabor roared. "He is dead!"

A crowd of cowboys, townsmen from Caxton who had come to the rodeo and a handfull of dudes gathered around the Indian's mount. An angry undertone of talk seethed through that crowd. Someone started it with the word, *massacre*, then, *lynch*. Hugh Edwards, the blacksmith from Caxton, appeared with a huge bull whip, long and viciously thin. Then someone uncoiled a rope and fashioned a hangman's knot.

"Lynch the Injun!" Edwards spat. "We'll teach them Hopis a lesson. Lynch 'im!"

New voices repeated the angry cry. The mob surged toward the Indian's pony. Someone grabbed the young brave's leg and jerked him to the ground. Then Edward's bull whip cut a hissing course through the air.

"Lynch?" I looked at Hodar. This was a completely new experience for me. In my ten months on the Earthian planet I had spent much of my time in centers such as New York and Washington; not once had I noticed men indulge in an activity called *lynch*. Was it yet another facet of American civilization that I must study?

"Good God," Hodar shouted. "They can't lynch him."

Men swarmed around the helpless Indian. Then the Colorado Kid came to his side, whipping out his twin ivory handled guns almost as if they were appendages to his hands. "This Indian is innocent," the Kid yelled.

"Look out!" I shouted.

My cry of warning came too late. Greco had slipped behind the Kid to smash the butt end of his revolver down on the cowboy's skull with a sickening thud. The Kid staggered forward dizzily and was shoved aside by the crowd.

I glanced at Tabor. He stood on the edge of the crowd, shaking his head. "You can't stop 'em now," he said. "The boys are blood wild. Can't blame 'em entirely."

The young Indian brave was yanked away toward the barn. He wore an absolute poker face but in his eyes I could see a look of incredible bewilderment touched with horror. His body stiffened as a rope went sailing over a joist jutting from the barn and one of the men hung the noose around his neck.

"Hodar!" I shouted desperately. "We've got to stop it. Take your cape off—Magic!"

HODAR had never had as tough an assignment as this in any theater.

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I've seen him make elephants disappear from a stage and have them reappear in a flash of brilliant color an instant later in an upper balcony aisle; I've seen him break out of escape-proof jail cells—but this was another thing.

He pushed his way through the crowd, yanking off his black full-length cape as he went. Upon reaching the Indian's side he drew a small packet from his pocket.

Instantly there was a blinding, white powder flash. As the billowing cloud of smoke blew away there was the figure of Hodar making an elaborate pass with his cape.

"Cripes!" someone shouted in amazement. *"The Indian! He's gone!"*

The men backed away momentarily, gaping at the noose swinging emptily from the barn joist. Then Hodar made another pass with his cape. A big white frantic rabbit struggled desperately to get out of the noose.

Two steps brought Hodar before the mob ringleader. "Convincing, isn't it?" Hodar snapped. "Try any more lynching around here and I'll make you all disappear . . . or I'll turn you into rabbits."

Edwards, the lynchleader, retreated. There came a low murmur from the crowd Hodar stared at the circle of half angry, semi-perplexed faces, matching will against will Again he moved as if to make another pass with his cape and the crowd fell back. "Lordy — don't!" someone shouted. The crowd backed away in disorder.

Tabor then rushed to Hodar's side. "Where the injun?" he cried unbelievingly.

"Safe," said Hodar.

"W-w-what did you do to make him disappear?" Tabor asked suspiciously.

Hodar grinned.

"Just made him disappear, that's all. Been doing it for years. By now he's up in Oscar's room in the ranch house. Let's go."

We started for the ranch house when suddenly I remembered that the Governor was due to arrive in Caxton shortly.

"The Sheriff can't meet him anymore," I said. "Maybe you'd better go," I told Hodar.

"I'll send Greco along too," Tabor cut in.

A FEW minutes later Tom Tabor and I repaired to my quarters in the ranch house where we found the young Indian, Bill Running Wind still pretty bewildered as a result of Hodar's high class snatch.

"How I get here?" he asked Tabor.

"Never mind," I cut in. "You're here. Isn't that enough?" I knew, of course, how Hodar had done it. Hodar's good at snap-hypnotism. And under cover of that blanket of smoke, the Indian had employed all the native craft at slipping away without being seen that had been passed on to him by his ancestors from ages back. It had all been called to the fore by Hodar's hypnotic spell. Most of the disappearance, naturally, had been simply some quick movements through the smoke.

The Indian stared at me queerly. He seemed distinctly shocked that I could speak and it was clear that he took me for some strange form of animal, perhaps Tabor's mascot. I was soon to find this trait of misinterpretation common among American Indians. Perhaps it has to do with my nose—but I'll come to that later.

Now, I doffed my ten gallon sombrero and while pacing the floor, shot questions at the brave. Realizing that detecting must always begin with generalities, I began by gathering information about the weather, Arizona

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mountains, Indian life in general. Then we came to the point.

"Where were you when this massacre occurred?" I asked.

The Indian's bronzed features took on a worried expression.

"In mountains," he said. "For a week I am hunting in mountains near Flagstaff. Early today I come back to my reservation. I find my people on warpath like old days. Nobody recognizes me. Indians from other tribes also on warpath. Nobody sleep."

"How'd you know Sheriff Stockton was going to be killed?" I asked.

"Am not sure," said the Indian. "I no like my people on warpath. Go away to Arroyo seco for sleep alone. White men ride by in arroyo so I listen. I hear them talk about sheriff. They say they got to kill him because he know too much about Indian trouble." The brave paused to take a drink of water.

"What troubles?" I interrupted.

The young Indian stared at me blankly.

"Somebody has been feeding the Injuns whiskey again," Tabor cut in darkly.

"My people not drunk," Bill Running Wind replied bitterly. "They are on warpath like old times."

"Why?"

"I no understand," replied the Indian.

"Who were the men you heard in the arroyo?" I asked suddenly.

The Indian jerked himself erect and stared from Tabor to myself, then out the window in a troubled manner. "I no see them very well," he began. "But I see brands on their ponies. One brand is from—from—fr—"

"Great Gods—look out!" Tabor shouted.

I lunged to one side and caught my breath at what I saw. The young brave leaped past me, brandishing a bowie knife above his head. His face was twisted in a savage leer as he slashed at my throat.

"He's gone mad, raving mad!" Tabor shouted, yanking desperately at his gun.

"YYYEEOOOEE!" The young Indian let out a blood curdling war whoop as he spun and leaped toward Tabor with murder in his glaring eyes.

The bowie knife went up. Instantly there was the deafening roar of a six gun. The bowie leaped toward the ceiling, the Indian let a wild, enraged cry fall from his foam flecked lips. A stream of blood coursed down his shattered wrist as he leaped upon Tabor before the latter could trigger his gun again.

THE battle ended as quickly as it had begun. With a bullet shattered wrist, the Indian was no match for Tom Tabor. In less than a minute Tom had the bronzed warrior roped as neatly as a branded calf.

"Plumb loco," Tabor grunted as he finished the knots on the rope and retrieved his own gun. Meanwhile the Indian struggled with his bonds and glared at the two of us without the slightest sign of recognition. "Gone wild just like the rest of them. Don't even recognize us. Might have scalped us if I hadn't winged 'im," said Tabor.

I said nothing. Instead I began snooping around, my tulip nose fluttering like the wings of a humming bird in nervous excitement. And boy was I excited! There was an odor in the room—a strange fascinating odor attached to the Indian.

That odor said something, but it sounded as garbled and unintelligible as esperanto. As you know, smells are my forte. We Martians use odors in place of sounds for speech. Having sensitive tulip noses and perfect control

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of all glands in our bodies, duct and ductless, we find it simple to converse without making sound.

It is like an athlete's control over muscles. We just control or read odor frequencies (we use sound as a source of power instead of outmoded electrical energy). Sometimes I forget myself, particularly with Hodar, and speak with odors until I notice my friend holding his nose. Then I remember that it's not polite to speak to foreigners in a language they can't understand . . . Particularly when it smells.

But now I was really upset. Here was an odor, to me a message, that was as garbled as a cross word puzzle. I snooped around desperately, smelling the Indian, various corners of the room and various objects while Tom Tabor stared at me as if I had gone daffy.

"What's wrong with you?" Tabor asked.

"I'm listening," I said.

"I don't hear nothing," said Tabor bewildered.

"The smell—" I said. "Don't you get it? Sometimes it sounds like Strawinsky, now it's like Basin Street Blues . . ."

That was as far as I got with my analysis of the contents of the odor. Suddenly there was a vigorous knock at the door.

"Come in," Tabor called.

A dudishly dressed, paunchy man swept into the room, followed by a thin hawk-nosed individual in a checkered suit. The paunchy man flashed a look of recognition at Tabor before his eyes sorted me out. I recognized him immediately from pictures I had seen—Boss Humbolt, head of the state political steamroller.

Humbolt sized me up contemptuously.

"You're Oscar Meyers?" he grunted.

"Oscar of Mars," I said proudly.

Humbolt glared at me curiously, meanwhile talking out of the side of his mouth to his aide.

"Funny little runt. Okay, arrest him, Joe."

Joe stepped around Humbolt, drawing an automatic from an armpit holster as he advanced.

"Wait a while," I said. "What's this about?"

"You're under arrest," Humbolt replied laconically.

"You can't arrest me," I replied. "I claim diplomatic immunity under United States laws and regulations in regards to treatment of official emissaries from foreign countries. I'm an emissary from Mars."

Humbolt frowned for a second; finally he puffed up like an adder. "Mars . . . United States laws, huh! Arrest him, Joe. I'm the law in this state."

Tabor quickly stepped between Humbolt's aide and me

"What's the matter, Humbolt? Why's Oscar wanted?" he asked calmly.

"This Oscar Meyers' pal, a gent named Hodar, just dusted off the Governor as his train pulled into Caxton," Humbolt answered.

"The Governor—dead!" Tabor said stunned.

"Dat's right," smirked Joe.

"Hodar never killed the Governor," I cried upon recovering from my first shock. "Not Hodar!"

Humbolt shrugged indifferently.

"Sez you! Your pal is in jail already. Nabbed in the act. Shot the Governor with that pint-size thirty-two of his."

"How sure are you?" I demanded heatedly.

"Look," said Humbolt. He flipped a twisted, steel-jacketed .32 caliber slug before my eyes. "We dug it out

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of the Governor's chest. There's only one gun that size in this state . . . The one your pal uses. And we got witnesses." Humbolt turned to Tom Tabor. "We ordered one of your hands to stay in town until the trial—if there ain't a lynching before then. He saw the shooting. Greco."

"Lynch Hodar—" I repeated aghast.

"You're under arrest as an accomplice to the murder of the Governor," Humbolt cut in.

I was too stunned for a moment to even think of escape. I visioned Hodar dragged from the Caxton jail by a wild lynch mob. No . . . They couldn't do that! Hodar held for murder, assassination . . .

I saw his pretty dark haired wife, Dedrie, who had remained behind in Washington waiting for a shipment of one of those mysterious Earthian things called "a blessed event." No! Dear Dedrie must be spared the shock that I now felt. Had I brought them together for this? Great Martian Gods, no!

CHAPTER III

The Talking Holster

"LISTEN, Humbolt! Oscar's a guest at the Sugar Creek Dude Ranch and he's a friend of mine," Tabor spoke squarely to the state political boss. "Yuh know Tom Tabor's word is good all over this state. As a favor I'm asking you not to take Oscar. I'm vouching for him."

My eyes sort of swam as I heard Tabor's words. I let a pleasant and friendly odor drift toward the big man in sheer thankfulness.

"You and Joe get back to Caxton," Tabor continued. "You know who runs this county, Humbolt. I'm expecting to see that Hodar isn't touched by any mob. He's going to get a fair trial or you're going to answer for it."

Boss Humbolt hesitated a moment, frowning at Tabor and me. He was probably counting the number of votes in the county and weighing them against Hodar's skin. Finally he nodded,

"Okay, Tabor," he said. "You bring him in when we ship the Judge down here."

The instant Boss Humbolt and his gun-toting aide departed I spun into action. With Hodar in jail for murder and myself temporarily free on word bond I figured it was high time to get working on the case.

I realized that it was already the most complicated job I had ever had in my short career as the only Martian detective on Earth. A sheriff murdered with a poisoned arrow. A complete tribe of Indians mysteriously going on the warpath, massacring whites, then vanishing from the reservation. An Indian going berserk just as he was about to reveal important information. Then Hodar framed on a murder charge—or was he?

"What did the Colorado Kid have to do with all this business?" I asked myself. "Better forget him for a minute and get down to detail now," I mused.

My plan of action devised itself speedily. I'd work from the rear of the case to the beginning. First I had to clear Hodar.

"A .32 caliber bullet in the Governor and a witness—Greco! There are ways to make Greco talk without him realizing it. That's my job."

I buckled a gun belt around my waist, eased the two-horn-handled, low-slung guns into the holsters. Because of my penguin shape and size, the guns sort of dragged on the ground, slapping my sides like sabers as I waddled across

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the ranch yard to the corral.

Though not a very distinguished sight, I was already a proficient horseman. I rode a knob-kneed pinto; sitting erect in the saddle, my body swaying gently in almost uncanny unity with the measured pace of my mount. Of course, since my legs were so stubby, I had to use napkin rings instead of stirrups.

As I galloped from the corral in a swirl of dust, I saw The Colorado Kid take leave of Alice Stockton, whom he had been talking with. He raced across the yard, swung upon his jet black horse and spurred after me. "I'll be moseying along with ya, little stranger," he drawled, pulling his horse to a trot beside my pinto. "I guess you're a-going into Caxton ta see about your pal in jail, eh?"

"How'd you know?" I asked.

"Got my ear ta the ground," the lean westerner smiled casually.

There was something I liked about the lanky rider. It lay behind his cold gray eyes and the half smile on his lips. Using the vernacular of the west, I tried to satisfy the curiosity that fairly itched within me.

"Listen, Kid," I said. "I haven't shuffled the deck yet. I figure you hold a couple of cards I'm needing so let's cut and start the deal. You know who I am. Let's start by you telling me who you are and why you wanted to see Sheriff Stockton before he got killed?"

The Colorado Kid stared momentarily toward the sage colored hills to the left of the road, then his eyes settled upon me frankly.

"Guess I know a lot more about you than you know about me," he said. "Oscar, detective of Mars—I sure think a lot of you. Heard about how you busted up them Zombie murderers in Washington. That was pretty smart thinking."*

"Smart smelling, you mean," I murmured, preening myself somewhat.

"Whall, maybe you can give me a hand," The Colorado Kid added. "I'm a special agent for the Indian Commission in Colorado. We've been having a little trouble with Indians on our reservations. Kinda mysterious too. Some of them clean forgot they was living in the 20th Century and getting sixty bucks a month from the Government. Went loco wild, off on the warpath like they was fighting the Indian wars all over."

"Uprisings?" I said, suddenly interested.

"Just the start of it," answered the Kid. "But we can't figure out why or how. I was put on the job and the trail sort of led down to this country."

"Trail?" I asked.

The Kid fumbled in his shirt pocket, his fingers jerking forth a tobacco sack. He undid the sack and handed me a rumpled piece of paper.

"A letter," he said. "We found it near the Southwest Reservation. Seemed to have some connection with the Indian trouble as far as I make out."

BEFORE unfolding it, I smelled the letter but found that it no longer held traces of identifying odors, save a smell which the Kid said was "Bull Durham." Then I read it.

START WIDESPREAD ACTION JUNE 12TH. GOODS DELIVERED. ARIZONA, NEVADA, CALIFORNIA, COLORADO, NEW MEXICO, UTAH AND TEXAS READY. THE TIME IS RIPE.

(Signed) LA CABEZA

* The Colorado Kid refers to Oscar's adventures in *Death Walks in Washington*, FANTASTIC ADVENTURES, March, 1941.—ED.

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"La Cabeza," said the Kid, "means *head*—the chief. The envelope this was found in came from the Hopi Reservation near Sugar Creek."

It was then that I jerked my pinto to a halt and stared at the Kid. "Great Gods," I cried. "Today is June 12th and the Indian uprisings are scheduled to blast loose on the reservations in seven states. There's going to be hell to pay in the West. Come on!"

The discovery of the letter Colorado Kid carried in no way changed my plans. We broke our horses from a gallop to an idle canter upon reaching the outskirts of Caxton. I led the way along the dusty main street, past the post office and the tumbledown jail where Hodar was prisoner, finally tying up before the Hondo Saloon.

I shoved open the tall swinging doors and stepped inside, followed by the Kid.

A half dozen men stood with their backs to the bar. Some of them opened their mouths in wonderment as I crossed the barroom floor, my guns trailing a line in the dust upon the creaky boards, and came to the end of the bar—face to face with Greco.

The Mexican wrangler stared down in astonishment; then a worried, deceitful expression framed his swarthy features. The cigarette in his mouth curled its smoke anxiously while his fingers cautiously slipped toward his gun butts.

"Keep your hands in your belt." The Colorado Kid's even voice addressed Greco.

Greco's thumbs came up, paused on his cartridge belt. He stared shiftily from the Kid to me. The men at the bar moved to one side.

"Greco! Who are you working for —Tabor or La Cabeza?" I snapped the question out.

The Mexican's brown fingers jerked involuntarily. He shot me a bewildered glance.

"La Cabeza?" he said. "I never hear that name, Señor."

I glared at the wrangler with cold, challenging eyes. "You never heard of it, eh?" I repeated.

"No, leetle one," Greco shrugged.

"Listen, Greco," I said. "I'm giving you one minute to say that Hodar didn't shoot the Governor. Now talk! One . . . two . . ."

"But I see him shoot," Greco answered smoothly.

"Talk—I said! Hear me!"

Despite the wrangler's smooth appearance, his eyes showed a quick flare of savage fury. That was exactly what I wanted. Deliberately, I goaded the man's rage.

"Talk, quick, you coyote," I spat.

Greco suddenly moved. Like a darting snake's head, his fingers stabbed downward. Fast—the man to beat that draw needed a gun with sights filed off and leather tied-down-hard.

Beside me, the Colorado Kid's hand was a slim blur with a chunk of flashing metal attached. Pounding gunthunder shook the walls of the rickety saloon as the Kid's six-gun pumped snub-nosed lead across the smoke filled gap. Greco's gun suddenly twirled sideways, clattering upon the floor while the Mexican grabbed his wrist in agony.

During the roar of guns I suddenly ducked to the floor. My delicate nose needed protection, and there was something else I was looking for—I'll tell you about that in a minute.

As the acrid smelling powder smoke subsided, I saw the Colorado Kid ranging the barroom with his twin guns. A couple of men considered a draw but changed their minds. To the right a man was kneeling under a table shivering on all fours.

"Git along, Oscar," The Kid coolly

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called to me. "We're leaving these hombres to lick their sores."

We backed through the swinging doors, still keeping the saloon covered. The door swung shut behind us as we reached sunlight and mounted our horses. Cantering down the street, the Kid turned to me, grinning.

"Partner, you ain't gonna last long if you work around like this. One of them talking guns is gonna clip your pretty nose off sure as nothing."

"I got what I wanted," I said.

"I didn't hear Greco do any talking," said the Kid.

Tossing a little wad of powder-burned paper that had fallen from Greco's holster during the draw into my hand, I came as close to a smile as I ever can.

"Greco didn't talk," I said. "But his holster talked plenty."

"Pretty careless of the Mex. That wadding could have plugged his gun," the Kid observed.

"Yeah," I grinned, "Careless enough to clear Hodar of murder if my guess is right."

The Kid reined his jet black mare in the direction of the town jail. As much as I wanted to release Hodar, I knew it wasn't time yet.

"Wait," I said. "Hodar's safer in jail for the moment—listen!"

IN front of Caxton's dust coated General Store a tinny radio blared forth a startling news broadcast. The Kid and I halted within hearing.

"Station KXY, Phoenix," the announcer's metallic voice drummed forth ominously. "Newsflash . . . A mysterious outbreak of Indian troubles sweeps the West at this very moment. Indians on at least a dozen Reservations in seven states have made attempts to massacre various small White settlements bordering the Reservations. According to latest reports war parties from the Zuni, Apache, Sioux and Hopi tribes are moving toward the Sugar Creek Basin in Arizona . . .

"Flash . . . A United States Cavalry unit has just been dispatched to the Sugar Creek area to intercept the rampaging redskins and quiet the disorder . . .

"Flash . . . Shocking confirmation of the report that Governor Henry Weeks of Arizona was assassinated today has just been received by this station. The Governor was shot as he descended from his private train at Caxton in the Sugar Creek area . . .

"Flash . . . Stand by for an important announcement. Local papers please print. This station has been requested to make an appeal for the celebrated detective, Oscar Mars, to report to the nearest FBI agency immediately . . . Station KXY, Phoenix . . .

"Flash . . . If you have troubles, if you live in the West, the Dimson Loan Company will be . . ." Someone snapped off the radio.

Glancing nonchalantly at the Colorado Kid, I tipped my sombrero rakishly and preened myself with a certain modesty. "I don't know what the United States Government and the FBI would have done if I hadn't come from Mars," I observed.

A crowd of townspeople, lanky buckeroos, cowmen and tradespeople had gathered around the General Store. Their first reactions to the broadcast had been those of doubt, then as the details piled one upon another, a growing element of mob anger shaped itself. Men instinctively fingered their gun butts or glowered toward the western ridge of hills—the Hopi Reservation.

"More trouble," drawled the Kid.

A big touring car, its motor purring powerfully, pulled up across the street and the crowd quickly encircled it.

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"Lot of trouble," I said. "That's Boss Humbolt in that car."

Humbolt faced the crowd with the airs and pomp of a petty dictator.

"What are you waiting for, men?" he shouted. "Our forefathers stopped the redskins, are you afraid? Are you going to wait until they come whooping into Caxton, scalping, murdering, burning? They're sending the United States Cavalry," he spoke ironically, "Well them horsemen won't get near Sugar Creek until tomorrow! What's going to happen to you between now and tomorrow?"

An ugly howl went up from the crowd. Men shook their fists.

"That's right," they shouted. "We've gotta fight!"

"Fight, and fight hard," Humbolt charged in a fiery voice. "The Indians must be put in their place, once and for all."

"Wipe every last one of 'em out;" someone shouted..

The crowd suddenly broke up as men leaped upon their horses while others scattered to get their guns.

"It's suicide!" the Colorado Kid said grimly. "They can't fight them Indians. It's plain ordinary suicide. What's Humbolt thinking of?"

"I've got a fair hunch. Come on. The answer is on the Hopi-Reservation. We'd better get along before too many people get killed."

"But the Indians aren't there," the Kid countered.

"That's right," I snapped. *"But the Reservation didn't vanish."*

CHAPTER IV

Prisoners Two

A BRAZEN sun slanted fiercely across the parched red rocks and drew sharp shadows from the spiny cactus and dull mesquite that surrounded Redstone, the Government administrative village in the center of the Hopi reservation.

There seemed to be a strange suspension of sound and life that stretched from the dark rim of the Black Mesa on the northwest to the Reservation itself as the Colorado Kid and I rode into the deserted village.

"Jist like I said before," the Kid muttered slowly. "Not an Indian in sight; not a white man left in the town."

Suddenly something strange happened. My pinto shied and flattened his ears. Then my nose caught the horrible, heart chilling odors—the smell of death mingled with the faint glandular odor of fear and surprise.

Leaping from my mount, I raced into the low redbrick administrative building. But, abruptly, I came to a staggering halt. My eyes fairly popped from their sockets as they swept the bizarre inhuman scene.

Lying in a twisted heap at the head of the stairway were a half-dozen white men, their skulls split, revealing ghastly and bloody fractures, the results of tomahawks. A six-shooter on the floor was covered with dried blood—the empty chambers mute evidence of the battle that was lost.

I glanced up at the Colorado Kid who nodded grimly toward a further room. "This ain't all," he said.

Following his gaze, I suddenly blinked, feeling even the thicker blood in my Martian veins chill.

"Great Gods!" I gasped with an icy intake of breath.

The shapely body of a slim girl was stretched across a table. Her clothing was half torn. Her throat was a mass of bluish ugly briuses. Her head hung back over the table edge in a fantastic unnatural position. And her head—it was— I turned my gaze aside, unable

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to look another instant.

"*Scalped—*" The Kid spoke laconically.

"What did they do here?" I asked, nodding toward the massacred people.

"Worked for the Indian Commission," replied the Kid. "Some of them were doctors, nurses, office workers, food administrators. They lived here."

My nose began to quiver almost involuntarily.

"The smell!" I cried. "The one that sounded like Strawinsky and Basin Street."

The Kid looked at me queerly as I buzzed around, snooping in and out, from one room to another, barely noticing the horror that confronted us in each new doorway. All at once the tulip ends of my nostrils vibrated so intensely that they began to shake my teeth. It was the Reservation food commissary and pharmacy.

I SNATCHED a group of jars from a shelf, examining them and their contents. The smell had me puzzled again. It was the same strange, semi-bitter odor I had detected at the Sugar Creek Dude Ranch the moment Indian brave, Bill Running Wind had gone berserk.

Finally I stared at the jars in amazement. The labels read: SAFFRON and BAYLEAF.

"It's queer," I remarked. "There are two extra chemical odors in here beside saffron and bayleaf. There is a touch of *Tincture Argalli spicati Colorado,* a marijuana quite different and five times as powerful as the common locoweed found in Texas and Mexico. I also get a smell of *Epinephrine,* a compound drug that raises blood pressure."

I looked at the Kid sharply.

"What do they do with this stuff?" I demanded puzzled.

The Kid shrugged. "The Indians use the saffron and bayleaf to color and flavor rice. But I never heard of them other things, except the locoweed. Never heard of them mixing that stuff up. Maybe you got something, Oscar."

I knew I had something. Whenever a case gets to the point where I can reduce it to chemical compounds it's easy sailing. Chemistry and bio-chemistry are my specialty due to my laboratory-like tulip nose and my capacity for deducting formulas — qualities every Martian is born with.

In my pocket I had the powder burned wad of paper that would clear Hodar of murder. In my mind I held the elements for the solution to the Indian puzzle. As far as getting Hodar out of jail, any kind of jail, I had a Martian trick up my sleeve—but I'll show you that later.

"Right now we've got to put two and two together and we'll find the key to the Indian puzzle," I said. "Number one, Kid, we drift over to the Zuni Reservation on the Black Mesa. See if the Indians have vacated that and check up on whether there's more of this big medicine on their commissary shelves. I'll meet you tomorrow at the Sugar Creek Fork. Dawn. Okay with you?"

After the Kid had gone, leaving me surrounded by the grim little village of Redstone, I went into action. The case had progressed to the point where things stood pretty clear in my mind. I needed work-space.

I set up a little laboratory of my own and began meddling with various Indian herbs. I went to one jar, then another, smelling, tabulating. I'm always pretty sensitive to odor harmonies but some, here, were amazingly savage. Maybe, because I'm a Martian, I'm different. The smell of Sage makes me moody. But I changed the label on a

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bottle of tetrachloride to "Indian love call." That's how it sounded to me.

By sundown I made my final experiment and the results were incredible. Mixing a bowl of saffron and bayleaf flavored rice (plus the *Tinc. Argalli spicati Colorado* and the *Epinephrine*), I fed it to an emaciated Indian dog I found in the village.

At first the beast looked a little drugged—the locoweed. Suddenly, instead of his bloodpressure rising, a strange change took place. For an instant the dog stiffened as if he had been shocked. Finally his hair stood up on end—the *Epinephrine*.

I backed away abruptly for the beast had become a howling plain-born wolf, baring his fangs at me, snarling hideously, totally oblivious of the fact it was my hand which had fed him a moment before.

"Come on, pooch, take it easy," I cooed placatively.

The dog snarled and leaped at me, snapping and slashing at my throat and delicate nose. He missed me by the barest fraction of an inch. I backed toward the door, meanwhile struggling to get my gun out. . .

An unexpected twanging sound vibrated behind me and for an astonishing instant I saw the wolf-like dog crumble a yard ahead of me with a feathered arrow protruding from his throat. Then I whirled, gaping in bewilderment.

So silently had the five Hopi Indians approached that I had no chance to escape. Bronzed hands gripped me from all sides so that before I knew it my own arms were fastened behind my back with rawhide thongs.

The Indians danced about, staring at me in wonderment, poking me with curious fingers. Wide white bands bound the straight black locks of the Hopis. Eagle and bearclaw necklaces were at their throats while their naked torsos gleamed with bear fat and their sweating faces glistened beneath coats of fantastically applied warpaint.

Although I noticed the curious way in which they watched me as well as poked me between the ribs with their long scalping knives, it was not until they had put a halter around my neck and had taken me off into the wilds where the main part of the tribe was encamped that I discovered what had saved me from a scalping.

At the main Indian camp they tethered me in the corral among the ponies. Finally it dawned on me — They thought I was some strange sort of animal, edible perhaps!

And now I got my worst shock. It was like a sudden clip on the nose.

In the center of the camp Indians were performing a blood pulsating, savage dance around a white person tied to a stake. It had become dark and I was unable to see clearly at that distance but in the flickering light from the campfires the figure struck me as strangely familiar.

The wild warwhoops of the braves sent chills through my body. They were more savage than Indian. It was as if the entire tribe had gone berserk, forgetting that they were surrounded by the United States, civilized country. The Indians danced, gyrated and leaped about, timing themselves to weird drum beats, slowly unnerving their victim—a preparation for more elaborate tortures to come.

I watched the wracking ritual until hours later when the last eagle-feathered brave, either drunk with his own violent savagery or dead from fatigue, flung himself to the ground to sleep off the effects of the orgy. The fires flickered low when I finally slipped from the corral and crept cautiously toward the circle.

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I picked my way skillfully through the brush in a manner unequalled by any redskin. Suddenly one of the Indians stirred. Crouching in the shadows, I held my breath and waited. A moment later I slipped forward again with the same pantherish caution. Twenty feet, ten, five . . . Then I clamped my teeth on a surprised gasp—

"Alice!" It was Alice Stockton.

The girl looked haggard from the ordeal she had endured, yet she took it as only a redhaired western girl can. She struggled to undo the cords holding her wrists when she saw me. An eastern girl would have sobbed a couple of times.

CHAPTER V

The Secret of the Red Men

"OSCAR—thank God you've come!" the girl whispered in relief.

I attempted a reassuring smile as I stepped over the body of a prone redskin and came to her side.

"I didn't come," I said. "They brought me."

"Where's the Colorado Kid?" There was a note of anxiety in her voice. By its queer little tremor I was sure that she and the Kid were ready to play housekeeping if the two ever got together again.

Alice indicated the thongs binding her wrists and legs.

"Get these undone, quick."

While I worked with desperate haste upon the fiendishly clever Indian knots, she told me what had happened.

"There's something wrong—something terrible. It's bigger and more horrible than we think," she said in a strained whisper. Then she shuddered momentarily and in the dim light I saw her youthful breast tremble in silhouette. For a second I forgot our peril. Even to a Martian, a girl like Alice is a thrill.

"The Indians," Alice continued. "Something's happened to them. They seem to have gone primitive. It's almost as if they've been pushed back a few generations. My grandfather was an old Indian fighter and these Hopis are acting the same as the Indians in his day."

I pricked up my ears. Although she had no knowledge of it, Alice had just answered the one big puzzle confronting me—the secret of the Indians. *Here was the solution to my unfinished experiment with the wild dog.*

"Pushed back—" I gasped.

"Yes," said Alice. "They seem to have forgotten everything that's happened to their nation, in fact in America, for the last two or three generations. They don't even talk English now. Only Indian, which I understand a bit. I thought it was queer when they first captured me. Then I saw them cooking in their old, primitive ways. They're on the warpath, Oscar! I heard them making plans in their war council for a big battle against General Custer's white soldiers at Echo Canyon."

"Custer?" I asked. The name was vaguely familiar.

"He's dead," said Alice. "He was an Indian fighter. His company was massacred in Montana by the Siouxs—but more than sixty years ago."

"Sixty—!" Suddenly I stopped fiddling with the knots and stared at the girl in amazement. "Great Gods!" I gasped. "Why didn't I think of it? Incredible!"

"Oscar—the knots?" Alice pleaded.

My fingers were paralyzed by the fantastic possibilities of the idea that had popped into my brain. It was the solution! Something had set the Indians back almost three generations. *A mysterious form of racial amnesia!*

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Racial amnesia, not individual amnesia! The thought almost floored me.

"And worse," I muttered, "It's like that dog that turned into wolf. The amnesia has made them forget everything for three generations. They've forgotten the Reservations, the United States Government, the Indian schools —they're fighting the Indian Wars all over again."

"Oscar! What are you talking about?" Alice cried in bewilderment.

"The drugs—" I said abruptly. "That mixture, it made them lose their time sense. The locoweed or marijuana jumbled up their memories. The epinephrine, in big enough doses, gave them such a shock it caused amnesia."

"Oscar!" The note of horror in Alice's voice suddenly jarred me to my senses. My eyes swept in the direction that she watched so intently, then I felt my heart clog my throat . . . Two barbarically painted Indian braves had arisen and were marching toward the corral.

A MOMENT later their cries of surprise seemed to arouse the entire camp. They had discovered that I was no longer in the corral.

"They're searching for you," Alice whispered tensely. "They'll be here in a second."

I saw one of the Indians lying nearby turn over. Desperately I worked again, tugging at the thongs holding Alice. The knots were so well tied even Hodar couldn't have slipped out of them. Instantly, I realized there was only one thing to do. Disappear! If the Indians captured me again they'd guard me closely, then I'd have no chance to rescue Alice.

Much as I hated leaving her in a moment like this, we both realized it was the only course. Alice smiled at me bravely as I scooted toward the camp border. A second later I raced down a brush covered incline while half the Hopi tribe stormed after me.

It was then I realized I was no match for an American Indian. My greater weight and sluggishness of limb, due to the difference of gravity between my own planet and Earth, could scarcely overcome the greater swiftness of the redskins. There was a wild shout behind me when one brave spotted my trail. Putting on a burst of speed, I came to a stagnant watering hole just beyond the camp.

Thinking quickly, I dove into the water and submerged myself amidst some water lily pads. And not a moment too soon. A half dozen Indians came to a halt around the pool just as the last ripples upon the surface smoothed out. They circled the embankment, certain that if any man had submerged himself in the water, he must soon come up for air. But I didn't.

They waited for five minutes, ten minutes, an hour. Not once in that time did I break the surface. And I thanked my planets that I was a Martian. My disguise had the redskins buffaloed. It might even surprise anyone. I was camoflaged as a water-lily. The only part of my body that showed above the water was my tulipnose, well surrounded by water-lily pads.

WATER is very conducive to thought. Archimedes discovered the principle of specific gravity when he yelled "Eureka" in a bathtub. I, Oscar of Mars, also had time for a good deal of thinking while in the Indian watering hole.

I had time enough to review the entire case on which I was working. As a result, I knew I was pretty near its solution. To my own satisfaction, I had cleared Hodar of a murder charge and incidentally I had the proof of who

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had murdered the Governor. That I'll tell you later. Actually the Governor had been killed in such an ingenious manner that the solution had come as easily as strawberries and cream.

Sheriff Stockton's death was more mysterious, but I already had a hunch who was connected with his murder. As for the strange racial amnesia which had suddenly sent the Indian tribes on the war path—well, I knew the chemical causes. Now all I needed was the human factor behind it. That still had me puzzled though I felt I was on the verge of discovery.

Being so engrossed in the thoughts, I scarcely noticed the quick passage of time. It was not until the warm rays of the morning sun penetrated the water and lily pads that I came to the sudden realization that Alice was still in danger.

Extremely cautious, I poked my head above the water while two water lilies clung to my conical ears. I waited a few minutes, scanning the bankment carefully, my eyes [illegible] for the slightest movement [illegible] the brush. Nowhere was there a sign of life. The Indians had apparently given up their search . . . Or maybe it was a trap, I thought.

Silently, I worked my way up the bank and crept soundlessly toward the Indian camp. Finally I stopped to listen. The strange, unearthly quiet of the place sent a chill through my veins. I didn't like that stillness. It wasn't what I had expected. Something had gone wrong.

At last, through an opening in the brush, I viewed the Indian encampment. *Deserted!* My heart sank to my toes as I ran forward to the place where I had last seen Alice Stockton. She was nowhere about!

"Alice!" I shouted. "Alice!"

I stumbled about, barely noticing the cold ashes of abandoned campfires. I swore bitterly at myself. I had blundered again. In the time that I was saving my own tough skin by hiding in the water hole they might have murdered the girl. I began snooping about, my tulip nose itching to snatch a sign of what the berserk savages had done with Alice.

Quickly picking up the trail, I plunged toward a narrow gap in the hills. My heart beat frantic orders to my hurrying feet for it knew that Alice might only be saved by the barest margin of time.

Then abruptly, I stopped and stared toward the head of the arroyo. I stared in half astonishment for down the cutting came a wild pack of barking, baying animals—bloodhounds, I believe they're called. A second later, Tom Tabor and a posse of men plunged into sight, whipping their horses around the bend at a thunderous clip.

THE howling bloodhounds raced through the sage and skidded to a stop in a half circle around me. Then a very strange thing happened. One after another, the dogs took turns leaping on me in friendly excitement, their ears flopping joyfully, their tongues taking long swiping licks at my face in sheer ecstasy. Some of them leaned against me, rubbing me with their shoulders almost coyly. Others mooned about, making a tremendous fuss over me as if I were their favorite movie star.

Tom Tabor hardly looked surprised upon seeing me surrounded by the dogs.

"Alice Stockton has disappeared," he said as he pulled up his horse. "We sent the dogs to trail her."

I stared at the dogs. Somehow they seemed to have lost all interest in the trail. They now sat around me, their long ears dangling haphazardly, their

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eyes filled with hero-worship.

"What's wrong with them hounds?" Tabor muttered. "I ain't never seen them act like that. You'd think they was in love."

I puffed out my chest in honest pride. I knew what was wrong. The bloodhounds were just overcome by hero-worship. They were paying homage to my super-sensitive tulip nose. Wasn't I, Oscar of Mars, the Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poiroit of bloodhounds? When they licked my face it was the same as a movie fan getting an autograph from their favorite star.

"What are you doing out here?" Tabor asked. "Thought you went to town."

"I'm trailing Alice. The Indians captured her," I said.

"Alice?" Tabor jerked.

I nodded. Suddenly I remembered Greco.

"Listen, Tabor," I said. "You've got someone on your ranch pulling wool over your eyes. One of your hands, Greco, knows a little more about the Governor's murder than you think."

"Greco? You mean the Mex wrangler?" Tabor glanced at me in surprise.

"Better arrest him," I said.

"Nobody's gonna arrest Greco," came the slow drawl from behind me. It was the Colorado Kid. He had slipped off his horse and crawled up among the rocks along the Arroyo to investigate what was going on. "Greco's dead!" he added flatly.

"Dead!" Tom Tabor stared at the Kid darkly.

"Dead—" I repeated. "He can't be. He murdered the Governor. *I've got the proof!*"

The Kid smiled at me. "Sorry, partner. Greco's dead anyway. I dusted him off. I was over by the Zuni Reservation where you sent me. Something happened there as at the Hopi Reservation here. All the government people massacred and the same smelling chemicals in those jars."

"What about Greco?" asked one of Tabor's men.

"He was there too—robbing the bodies. So I dusted him off. I never could stand buzzards, birds or human."

For a moment I felt slightly dizzy. I wanted Greco alive. I needed him to prove that Hodar wasn't a murderer. Now it would take me weeks to get Hodar out of that jail. We'd have to go through an entire legal rigmarole.

"Listen," said the Kid, "Greco's small fry. This Indian trouble is coming to a head. I got information that thousands of redskins, war parties from four tribes, are moving in on Echo Canyon. The U. S. Cavalry unit from Fort Gore is due through there on its way to Sugar Creek! They're gonna be ambushed! We've got to warn them. Come on!"

"No!" I said. "I'll take care of that."

They looked at me queerly.

"I'll handle the Indians," I repeated. "You've got a job, Kid. Alice has been kidnapped. You and Tabor have got to trail her and bring her back safely. Okay?"

CHAPTER VI

The Mystery of La Cabeza

MID-MORNING I rode into Caxton on a borrowed pinto. Having avoided the roads, I came in across country and headed directly for the local livery barn where I put up the pinto. I then prepared myself for a desperate plan I had conceived to liberate Hodar.

I needed Hodar if I were to stop the Indian march on Echo Canyon. And I needed something else too . . . The

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final proof of what had started the Indian trouble.

I fitted myself out with a Remington rifle and a horsehair lasso. The livery stable man eyed me curiously, but said nothing. He was more interested in the fate of his townsmen who were out in the hills, courting death, trying to locate the Indian war parties. Perhaps he thought I was going out to join them.

After first glancing up and down the deserted sweltering street, I cut behind a couple of houses and approached the town jail. Then I saw Hodar's handsome though worried face in one of the cell windows.

"Oscar," he cried. "Where've you been? What the hell is happening around here?"

"I'm getting you out, Hodar," I answered briefly.

"You can't," Hodar shook his head grimly. "Wait until you see what they've done to me."

"Is there a guard?" I asked quickly.

"Yes. In the front. But that doesn't make any difference. You'll see."

"Start making a racket," I cut in. "Make plenty of noise, right now. I'll handle the rest."

Hodar looked at me gloomily.

"Okay, but it won't help," he answered.

I slipped away from the barred window, wondering what had happened to my friend that he should be in such a hopeless frame of mind. Wasn't my coming a good sign? Just as I came around toward the front of the jail I heard Hodar begin yelling like a maniac, beating the bars of his cell and screaming.

The noise went on for about a minute—just long enough. I pushed my way into the jail house and saw a peg-legged man, the guard, beating the bars of Hodar's cell with a club in order to quiet him.

"Cuss that racket!" the guard growled. "Murdering varmint, can't you let a man sleep?"

"Sleep is right," I grunted, letting the guard have the butt end of my Remington.

The fellow dropped to the floor with a dull thud. He hadn't made an outcry. In less than a minute I had him thoroughly wrapped with the horsehair lariat, then I turned my attention to Hodar.

"Come on, Hodar! We've got work to do," I said. "Where does this fellow keep his keys?"

"Work! Keys!" Hodar answered satirically. He pointed at the locked cell door. "If all that was needed were keys, I would have been out of here already," he snapped. "I'm a magician and an escape expert but between Houdini and I, we've never been able to break out of a cell like this."

I looked at the door, then my mouth shot open, gaping rather foolishly. *The iron lock of the door was welded in place!* The townspeople knew Hodar was a magician. They weren't taking any chances of having him break out.

"You'll have to get an acetylene torch," said Hodar.

"We haven't got time," I snapped. "Let me think."

"Maybe I should starve so I can squeeze through the bars," Hodar cut in scornfully.

"Listen," I said. "Close your eyes, Hodar. Do exactly as I say. I'm going to do something that may even astonish you as a magician. Now do exactly as I say . . . Eyes closed . . . Thinking of nothing but the bars . . . Think hard . . . Breathe evenly, then for an instant, stop thinking of everything . . . Ready?"

HODAR nodded silently. I reached through the bars, touching Ho-

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dar's chest with my hand. His heart beat was exactly right. Quickly, I drew a small gadget from my pocket, a tiny iridescent metallic tube with a small dial fixed to its surface. I will not take time at the moment to explain the details of its mechanism save to note that the tube came with me from Mars and this was the first time I found myself forced to use it on Earth.

I twirled the dial, hit the exact calibration. Instantly there was a flash of yellow light in the jailroom. It worked! Hodar now stood beside me, free. His cell was empty and the door was untouched, still welded.

My friend looked at me in bewildered amazement and failed to notice that I slipped the tube back in my pocket.

"Oscar," he gasped "What did you do? How'd you get me out here?"

"Magic," I answered off-handedly. "Martian magic. Unlike your Earthly magic which deals mainly in sleight of hand technique, our Martian magic is based on science or scientific principles."

"But how'd you get me out of there?" Hodar repeated a bit stunned.

I smiled and tried to explain in simple terms.

"Optical transmission," I said. "I'll give you the details some day when your theater audiences get bored with your own brand of magic. But now, we've work cut out for us."

I briefly explained what had transpired since I had last seen Hodar. I told him about the gunfight with Greco. The Indian amnesia developments and the impending ambush of the Government cavalry troops in Echo Canyon.

"Good Lord," Hodar cried. "If those troops are ambushed and massacred there's no telling what will happen in the West."

"That's what I'm afraid of," I said "Someone administered the drugs causing the Indian amnesia. Someone also engineered the murder of Stockton and the Governor. We've got to find out why?"

"Yeah, but who knows?" Hodar asked hopelessly.

"Stockton," I said.

"But he was murdered."

"Murdered or not, he's got information we want. They brought his body to the jail to await a coroner's examination, didn't they?"

"It's in his office," said Hodar. "Next room over. I'll show you."

A moment later Hodar and I were examining the Sheriff's office. It was a bare cubicle. On a table in one corner, the dead man lay, covered by a strip of canvas. On the floor was his ten gallon sombrero. My eyes leaped toward the battered roll-top desk near the window.

"Look," I cried excitedly. "Someone had the same idea. They've searched the place."

The roll-top desk was a mess. Papers had been pulled from the various pigeon holes, dumped on the floor, drawers left open.

"Don't think they found anything," I added. "They messed things up so much it looks as if they were angry. Furthermore, Sheriff Stockton wasn't the kind to leave important papers in his desk when he was to meet someone whom those papers concerned at the Sugar Creek Dude Ranch rodeo."

Turning from the desk to the table where Stockton's body lay, I yanked the canvas strip aside, staring at the stiffened corpse. The Peace man was still clothed in his blue dusty corduroys. His gunbelt was still around his waist and his high-heeled cow-boots pointed upward stiffly.

I asked myself, "Where would a western sheriff hide important papers?"

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Then, almost involuntarily, I responded to a hunch and to Hodar's amazement I tugged vehemently at the dead man's boots. His left boot came off. I sniffed in it and threw it aside. In the right boot I found what I wanted—a sheaf of flatly pressed papers and letters.

HODAR snatched the letters from me and spread them on the dead man's chest.

"Oscar, these are the papers Alice Stockton spoke of!" Hodar cried excitedly.

Then I got the jitters worse than Hodar. These papers were real dynamite. There was a chart of the Western United States with the various Indian Reservations marked out, also a series of curious defense lines extending from the Dakotas to the Mexican border.

"Looks like a big Maginot Line facing the Eastern two-thirds of the United States," Hodar commented.

I hurriedly paged through the remainder of the papers. I knew the answer to that defense line would be among them. There were at least a dozen letters from Boss Humbolt to La Cabeza and answers from the mysterious chieftain. There were also signed letters and instructions from La Cabeza to individuals who apparently worked in the government offices on the various Reservations.

"Good God," Hodar murmured. "We've even got Fifth Columnists on our Indian Reservations."

Suddenly I grabbed a note typed on paper that carried the letterhead, WESTERN MOUNTED RESERVE. It was from La Cabeza to Humbolt. I read:

WESTERN MOUNTED RESERVE
Dear Humbolt:

The time is now ripe! Washington is preoccupied with the foreign situation and will naturally underestimate the extent of trouble once the Indians go on the warpath. Our agents are prepared to administer the necessary drugs in all Reservations shortly before June 12th. Government troops will probably be sent to quell the trouble, but in underestimating its extent, they will be massacred.

The resulting developments will include widespread riots which will immediately discredit Washington in the eyes of the West. As the tension increases we will mobilize the Western Mounted Reserve to take over.

The political machines in each western state are fixed, through our key people, and are prepared to unite in a secession movement similar to the ill fated Southern Confederacy. You, Humbolt, are to set up the capital in Phoenix. I will remain behind the scenes, directing and maintaining control of the Western Mounted Reserve.

(signed) *La Cabeza*

For a moment both Hodar and I were thunderstruck. Here we were staring at the proof of the most fantastic plot anyone had ever conceived against the United States. Neither of us could move for a few stunned minutes.

Finally Hodar gulped and stuttered.

"H-h-humbolt! He's behind this too! A secession movement to split the west from the east. B-b-but why did they frame me?"

"Frame you," I cried. "Why, the whole plot is a frameup. They're creating race riots in order to frame the U. S. Government. The thing is all timed to work so fast that the people in Washington won't know what hit them . . . and with the European situation on their hands, oh boy!"

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"How do the secessionists think they can handle the Indians?" Hodar asked worriedly.

I crammed the revealing papers that had caused Stockton's death into my pocket and started for the door.

"The Western Mounted Reserve can do that," I explained hastily. "Remember, Hodar, while we were in Carlsbad we heard something about the Mounteds. They're a secret blackshirt army. They're organized all over the West. They have their own arsenals and rifle ranges. They've been preparing for this. All along people thought they were just crackpots. Now they won't."*

"Too bad Sheriff Stockton didn't report this right away," said Hodar.

"He was cautious," I said. "He wanted to investigate. Then Boss Humbolt or the mysterious La Cabeza discovered he knew too much. They did him in."

I reached for the door, but before my hand touched the knob, the doorway banged open. In the archway stood that familiar figure; behind him the man in the checkerboard suit.

"Humbolt—" I staggered back.

CHAPTER VII

Torture

A SATISFIED grin spread across Boss Humbolt's heavy jowled face and the grin seemed to spread to the hawk-like features of his aide, Joe. The latter slipped an automatic from his shoulder holster, leveling it at us.

"Where do you think you're going—freak?" he sneered at me.

I could feel my blood boil at the insult. I also noticed Hodar's fists clench and unclench spasmodically. I threw my friend a warning glance, then looked up at Humbolt.

"You're too late, Humbolt," I spoke evenly. "Too damn late. We know your game. You aren't stopping us now! The dead man inside there,"—I nodded toward where Sheriff Stockton's body reposed—, "just talked."

"Shut up!" Humbolt growled.

"Boss Humbolt—front man for the Confederate Western States," I laughed sarcastically. "You and your razor-nosed gunman. Do you think you can stop me? You're small time stuff, that's what." I spoke coldly, smoothly, egging both men on with insult after insult, drawing their attention upon me and away from Hodar.

Suddenly I flashed Hodar a quick meaningful glance. At the same instant I bowled toward Humbolt's legs. The paunchy one was so taken by surprise that he stood there until my full weight (and on Earth I weigh just double what I do on Mars) crashed across his knees, carrying him to the floor in a grunting heap.

Humbolt's aide turned his gun on me, pumping hot lead at short range. The slug staggered me, bit into my flesh like mosquitoes or ricocheted into the adobe walls of the jailroom. Indifferent to bullets as only I can be, I leaped upon Humbolt's paunch, blasting the last ounce of wind out of him.

From the corner of my eye it was clear that Hodar hadn't wasted time. His agile foot came up, kicked the gunman's weapon from his hand. Humbolt's aide let out a howl of pain and backed away, snarling like a trapped wolf.

"You guys could never fight without

* This may be getting too close to home for publication, but in June, 1940, the FBI uncovered a secret western army similar to the one above. It was known as the U. S. Police Reserve. It was headed by one A. Dinnley. The FBI arrested Dinnley after discovering an arsenal in a Los Angeles warehouse containing $80,000 worth of munitions and guns.—Ed.

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guns," Hodar shouted as he plunged after the man, his fists beating the other's face with a swift tattoo of sharp blows.

"Go to it, Hodar," I yelled while holding down Humbolt who struggled feebly beneath my compact bulk.

Then there was a sickening crack. Hodar's fist seemed to sweep up suddenly. It connected with Joe's paper thin jaw. The latter's jaw literally crumbled and the man half turned and slumped to the floor, a groaning heap of bones and flesh.

Hodar turned to me with a boyish grin. "Almost felt like *papier maché,*" he said.

"This is no time for jokes," I snapped. "Let's tie them up and put them in a cell. We've got work to do. We've got to figure out some way of stopping those Indians before they massacre the Government cavalry in Echo Canyon."

HODAR and I returned to the livery stable and procured a fast little pinto and a strawberry roan. As Hodar mounted his horse he glanced at me in a disturbed manner.

"Now that we've got Humbolt locked up in a cell, you still aren't at the bottom of this case. Humbolt's only a front man."

"Right," I said. "But if we can stop the Indians before they hit Echo Canyon it's going to upset La Cabeza's strategy. Then he might have to expose himself."

"But how in the hell are you going to stop a whole Indian nation that has amnesia?" Hodar asked. "You can't argue with them."

Reining my pinto toward the edge of town, I put my brain to work. That's the beauty of a Martian brain: it tackles a problem directly, unimpeded by excess thoughts which so muddle average Earth brainmen. In a short space of time I had completely reviewed the Indian background and its inter-relationship with the medical background of amnesia. Then I considered it in relationship with the drugs administered to the Indians. How does one get amnesia? What gives an entire Indian tribe racial amnesia?

Suddenly I snapped my fingers. From the sparkle in my eyes anyone could tell that I at last had the solution.

"Dynamite!" I shouted to Hodar.

"Dynamite?" Hodar asked in a stunned voice.

"Yes. We'll let the Indians ride into the canyon. Then, when they're all inside we'll dynamite!" I answered enthusiastically.

Hodar stared at me as if I were crazy. His face had gone pale and his lips moved disconcertedly.

"That's mad, Oscar," he cried. "You can't use dynamite on a thousand Indians—that's worse than murder!"

"I'm handling this," I said. "It's the only way. We're playing against big odds." I spurred my horse to a gallop until we came to the railroad siding just beyond the town. Then, to Hodar's bewilderment, I rode back and forth along the tracks until I spotted what I wanted—a padlocked box marked DANGEROUS EXPLOSIVES.

"Keep a weather eye that no one bothers us," I ordered Hodar. Meanwhile I dismounted and shot the padlock away with my rifle.

For the next few minutes Hodar and I were busy splitting the dynamite stick into small packets, none really large enough to cause any real material damage. Some of the packets we manufactured were no larger than a human thumb, others were as large as a teacup.

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"Now the fuse," I said.

Hodar's astonishment continued to grow as my plan began to evolve. By joining normal discharge fuses in a series we finally had a tremendously long fuse, perhaps a thousand yards in length. The little bags of dynamite were attached at intervals until they looked like clothes pins on a line.

"This isn't going to do any good," Hodar murmured. "You haven't got enough TNT in one place to rattle my teeth."

"Hang on a while," I smiled as I wrapped the dynamite fuse in a coil, looped it over my saddle horn, mounted and again spurred my pinto across the sage covered slopes.

FOR a while both Hodar and I were silent as we drove our horses into the blinding sunlight of the west. We were both intent upon reaching Echo Canyon before the Indians. We had to if we were to succeed.

I had already learned of a short cut to the canyon through a region called Trigger Gulch. Ten minutes later we swerved into the Gulch and urged our mounts on at breakneck speed. The horses stumbled through the rocky terrain, their hides breaking into a matted sweat because of the difficult going. Behind us, a tell-tale cloud of dust trailed our heels.

It was that dust which brought trouble—trouble that looked like the end of our trail. As we rode into a rimrock basin at the butt end of the Gulch my pinto suddenly sniffed and rippled his brown hide.

I pulled up abruptly, my eyes scanning the rocky basin intently.

"What is it?" Hodar asked, reining in beside me.

I shook my head. I could see nothing, no sign of danger. The red dust basin was quiet as death. The only visible signs of motion were the rising shimmering heat waves rippling above the rocks.

"Git along, dogie," I growled at the pinto.

Again the pinto rippled his brown coat, flattened his ears and shied. As I spurred him on into the basin he began to sniff uneasily, to dance. Then something clicked in my brain—a warning that had come to my own tulip nose.

"Back, Hodar!" I shouted excitedly.

I reined the pinto back on his hind legs, grabbing at the Remington in the saddle holster. Spurring around in a semi-circle I began pumping lead at the rocks in the basin.

Hodar spurred to my side.

"What's up, Oscar?" he shouted above the gun roar.

In answer, an arrow sang over our heads, the shaft splintering against a rock outcrop behind us. I saw a feathered war bonnet pop out from behind a rock. My gun barked at the gaudy feather and the weirdly painted face beneath it.

Bullets and arrows mingled their deathly songs in the air around us. Then the Hopis, aware of their discovery, came into view. By then it was too late for Hodar and me to make track. A dozen lithe Indians appeared from behind the rocks as if by magic. With wild war whoops and shrieks they surrounded our mounts, grabbing for our legs to drag us from the horses.

I brought my Remington down on one skull, covering an eagle feather bonnet with blood before I found myself jerked to the earth and pinned down by a score of arms. Hodar had already been overpowered.

"Looks like we're never going to use that dynamite," he called hopelessly.

"Ugh—" that was all I could say for a bronzed arm was clamped across my mouth.

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The Indians didn't waste time. They captured our horses and started off for a little arroyo that flushed into the basin a few hundred yards to the right. They seemed to be in an awful hurry, as if they had business to attend. When we were dragged into the wash I saw the kind of business.

"Good Lord!" Hodar gasped. "Torture!"

ABRUPTLY, I sucked in my breath. Although I am a complete stranger to fear because I have such perfect control over my adrenal or fear glands, I was shocked myself. The sight of three stakes surrounded by firewood hardly upset me. What really did me in was the person tied to the center stake—Alice Stockton!

In a moment the Indians had Hodar and me tied to stakes, one on each side of Alice. Then they danced around while one of their number, the Medicine Doctor, touched a firebrand to the dry brush encircling our feet.

I could feel the flames crawling upward as I glanced toward Alice Stockton. She smiled tiredly—the bravest girl I've ever seen. Even a burning death at the stake failed to shake her courage.

"Looks like every time I see you, Oscar, I'm tied to a stake—sort of a profession," she smiled bitterly.

"Good God! This is the end!" Hodar cried. "These damn savages! What's wrong with them?"

Alice Stockton winced for the flames were now licking at her legs. I turned my eyes away for I couldn't bear to see the girl suffer.

"Why all the rush to get rid of us?" Hodar growled.

"They want to join the main war-party at Echo Canyon," I answered while at the same time struggling with my bonds.

Suddenly, a huge buck of an Indian dancing in the circle around us, leaped through the flaming brush toward me. In his hand flashed a long wicked scalping knife. The Indian grabbed my head, twisted it to one side. I felt my blood run cold. *I was to be scalped!* I could almost feel the cold blade!

What came next had me dizzy, it occurred so fast. Another Indian, a lean gangling brave dove through the flames, flashing a knife above Alice Stockton. The girl's nerve finally broke and she screamed in terror. I didn't blame her.

Then, strangely, the second brave's knife, instead of slashing across the girl's skull, flashed downward cutting the thongs holding her wrists and legs. At the same moment, in blurred motion the lanky brave jerked a pistol from his buckskin breeches and fired short range at the Indian threatening me.

Suddenly I felt my hands free! The big Indian fell at my feet, his bronzed flesh searing with an ugly odor upon the live flames destined for me.

CHAPTER VIII

La Cabeza Gets Away—Almost

BULLETS rattled into the reddish soft soil. A circle of hot lead poured among the Indians who had danced around us a moment before. I saw angry gun muzzles poking behind rocks and ridges. Shrieks of baffled fury rang out from among the Indians as they faced the surprise hail of lead.

I stared from the hills and rocks to the lanky Indian who had so amazingly released Alice, Hodar and me. He pumped slugs from double six shooters at the few Indians who were still able to run for cover. Once he wiped the sweat off his brow, then I stared, even more startled. The skin on his forehead, no longer bronzed, showed white!

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"The Colorado Kid—" I yelled above the gun roar.

The Kid flashed me an excited smile and again turned his attention to his death spewing guns.

A handful of Indians, survivors of the surprise attack swiftly fell back among the rocks in the arroyo. A couple of them knelt to shoot with their outmoded bows and arrows. Dust and flesh searing lead drove them back again.

The Colorado Kid reloaded his guns, fired from both hips, dropping one redskin after another. Then the remaining braves made a break for it, running with unmatchable speed toward their horses. A second later the wild warriors leaped to the backs of their blanketed mustangs and swirled off through the torturous bends up the arroyo.

The Colorado Kid turned toward us, grinning.

"Guess we shooed 'em," he drawled.

I glanced at his strange attire: bronze tinted bear grease covered his handsome face, chest and arms. He wore an elaborate Indian warbonnet covering his sandy hair. His lanky legs were encased in fringed buckskin pants, loose around the bottoms.

The Kid looked at himself, then at Alice.

"Had to rig myself up like this," he said. "Had to get near enough to get you free. I wasn't sure if Tabor would show up in time. But I wasn't counting on Oscar and Hodar getting caught too."

Alice Stockton smiled, saying nothing. But she stood so close to the Kid that his arm went around her shoulders in a most unnoticeable manner.

Tom Tabor rode up with a couple of men who were busily cleaning the dust from their hot rifles as they came. Big Tom looked relieved that none of us were hurt.

"Nice work, Kid," he nodded. "My boys just got themselves in position when you started the fireworks." He turned to Alice. "It's been pretty hard on you, child. I think you'd better get back to the ranch and rest."

"Thanks, Mr. Tabor," Alice smiled. "I'm staying with the Colorado Kid. I'll go back when he does."

The Kid grinned happily but shook his head.

"You'd better go back with Tom," he said. "I ain't very human looking with this warpaint on and anyway I guess Oscar and I have a middlin' job to finish."

The girl shook her head vehemently and stood even closer to the Kid. Meanwhile Tabor frowned upon us.

"We'd better all go back," Oscar included. He spoke gruffly. "This country's no longer safe for a white man to be roaming around in. The Indians are closing in on Echo Canyon pronto. We'd better be moving to safer ground."

I glanced at the sun. The U. S. Cavalry unit was due to come through Echo Canyon before sunset There was less than an hour left.

"Let's go," I snapped. "We'd better all go to the Canyon."

TABOR sat stiffly upon his horse. The men behind him muttered among themselves in a surly tone.

"Are you crazy?" Tabor stared at me.

"You're safer there than here," I countered.

"We're going to the ranch," Tabor growled. "I'm not trusting Alice to any of your harum-scarum adventures. We're going where it's safe. Them Indians will be in the canyon in no time."

"Listen, Tabor! You heard what Oscar said," The Colorado Kid's cool, slow drawl came from my right.

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"It's mad!" Tabor answered.

The big ranchman's eyes flickered toward the Kid's lean hands which rested ominously on his gun butts. Tabor hesitated a second, finally he shrugged his shoulders.

"All right," he growled. "I'm not afraid, but I think it's crazy. The canyon is no place for a girl."

I rounded up my pinto where the Indians had hobbled him and spun into the saddle. The coil fuse and hanging packets of dynamite were still untouched. With our time narrowing down to a point where the odds were fifty to one against us having time to work out my plan, I spurred the pinto ahead until the creases on his flanks looked like a railroad team-track network.

Hodar rode beside me. Tabor and his men swung in behind while the Colorado Kid and Alice Stockton brought up our rear. I guided the swift pinto back through the trail across the red dust basin until we came to a fairly level chaparral covered spread. Here we gave the horses their head and raced against the dying sun until our mounts were fairly staggering under the pace.

At last we skirted the rim of Echo Canyon, a yawning gash of torturous bends and sheer sandstone cliffs and escarpments that stretched a couple of dozen miles to the Southwest.

"Where are you going to plant the stuff—along the rim?" Hodar asked. "You haven't got enough dynamite packed in one bundle to budge a rock."

"We're going down." I pointed out a steep trail, a series of sharp-edged rock ledges of eroded red stone cut by wind and water into steps.

The pinto skillfully picked his sliding, halting way down the rubble and shale descent. The trail covered a quarter of a mile and we lost the direct sunlight once we reached the level, grassy floor of the canyon.

Tabor rode alongside me as I began uncoiling the dynamite fuse.

"Listen," he said desperately. "We've got to get out of here. The Indians will be charging through here any minute. There're thousands of them and they're fighting mad. They've got amnesia! Come on, let's get out!"

"Oscar, you are nuts," Hodar cut in. "If you're going to use dynamite in here the canyon wall will cave in and trap us as well as the Indians."

"Dynamite the walls?" Tabor looked positively frightened for a man of his size. His skin turned pale, then green. He glanced from side to side, searching for an avenue of escape. Then he began shouting like a maniac, his heavy voice scaling to a uncontrolled pitch. "God, Man!" he screamed. "Let me out of here. I ain't going to die. Not me!"

"Quiet!" I yelled.

Tabor sobered up for a moment.

"Listen," I said coolly. "You're not going to get hurt. I'm handling this. You people just keep close to me and keep quiet for a couple of minutes. I've got a job to do."

I SLID off my pinto for a minute, imbedded the tail-end fuse of my dynamite line between a couple of rocks. Then, for the next ten minutes I zigzagged here and there across the canyon, from one wall to the other. Each time I stopped I yodeled in a way that would put any Alpine mountaineer to shame.

Tabor, Alice, the Colorado Kid and even Hodar followed me with growing anxiety. Occasionally I saw them looking at me askance, as if to say, "Little man, the last two days have been too much for you, you need a psychiatrist."

Despite their troubled glances, I trailed the dynamite fuse behind me

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and whenever I came to what looked like a good spot I puffed up my lungs, tilted up my nose like a trumpet, opened my mouth and warbled—*Y-Y-YOOO-D-D-DEE-I-I-OOOEE-OOO-oooo!*

I listened for a return on my yodel. The quavering sound rattled through the canyon, bouncing from wall to wall, reverberating loudly, finally bouncing back upon me from one of the abrupt angles in the sheer escarpments of the canyon.

At the length Hodar broke under the strain.

"Man alive, Oscar," he cried. "This is no time for comedy!"

For an answer I yodeled again, listened and buried another portion of my dynamite. Then I scrambled up the side of the canyon wall like a mountain goat and deposited the last of my TNT.

"A neat job, well done," I announced as I returned to the group. "That dynamite is planted all over the place. Wait until you hear it!" I glanced toward the southwest end of the canyon, half expecting to see an Indian war bonnet pop up behind each rock and bend.

"Tabor—" I heard Alice Stockton's warning voice and spun around to find myself gazing into the muzzle of Tom Tabor's rifle. Tabor's silent men, already on their horses behind their boss, had the Colorado Kid, Hodar and the girl covered with their six-guns.

"Tom Tabor," Alice cried. "Put those guns down. What do you mean?"

Tabor ignored the girl, turned to one of his riders, issuing a clipped order.

"Ride down aways, Hank. Give us the signal when the Indians come through."

Then the ranchman turned toward me, scowling.

"I don't know how you're going to stop those Indians with that TNT you planted," he said. "Maybe it might work. Maybe it won't. But I'm not taking any chances. Those Indians have got to come through. You're never going to touch off that fuse."

Although the Colorado Kid, Alice and Hodar gasped over the little speech they heard, it hardly disturbed me. I knew Tabor was going to come out in the open, making that little confession sooner or later—*but I didn't expect him to have the upper hand.*

"So you're La Cabeza?" the Colorado Kid asked coldly. "The murderer of Sheriff Stockton."

ALICE STOCKTON stared at the Kid and stifled a sudden scream. The Kid threw his arm protectively around the girl's slim shoulders, saying,

"It's all right, Alice, I'll even that score up yet."

"Stockton!" Tabor grunted indifferently. "I've never killed a man. Who's going to prove it?"

"You never kill," I interrupted. "You just give the orders. You had Stockton murdered. Then you had the Governor murdered and Hodar framed on that count because you thought he was a little too dangerous to have around when you were getting your secession movement going, eh?"

Tabor scowled darkly.

"You know too much, eh?" he growled.

"That's what I thought," I snapped back.

The ranchman glanced up the canyon where his rider had disappeared. He turned toward us with a satisfied leer on his heavy face.

"Okay, partners," he said. "You've just got time to say your prayers. Those Indians are coming through this canyon and you aren't going to be alive to tell about it."

Alice Stockton stepped in front of

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the Colorado Kid and faced Tabor, staring at him angrily.

"You wouldn't shoot us, Tom Tabor!" she cried. "Not in cold blood!"

Tabor swept the girl's trim figure with a frank appraising glance.

"I'm not shooting anybody," he grinned brazenly. "Maybe you want to join up with me. I've got room for a partner. As for your friends, I'm not killing them—the Indians will!"

Alice moved closer to the Kid, a look of stark horror framing her face.

"Why, you—you—"

Her words remained unsaid, for Tabor's rider came galloping up the canyon, lashing his mare at fever heat. Meanwhile another more ominous sound clashed in my ears—the beat of thousands of hoofs mingled with the blood chilling war cries of as many crazed Indians.

The Indians had seen the lone rider. They had mistaken him for an out-rider attached to the U. S. Cavalry unit and instead of waiting in ambush were charging madly down the canyon. Tabor's horseman clattered past us, shouting,

"They come, the whole damn bunch of 'em. Git going!"

Instantly Tabor whirled his own horse, spurring it toward our mounts which were grazing a dozen yards away. He plunged in their midst, fired a few shots and stampeded the horses. I started to run—but too late. We had to stay now and face the raging Indians. Our horses were gone. That was Tabor's revenge. He didn't have to kill us—he left that for the Indians.

The Colorado Kid's right hand blurred toward his holster. Then his gun seemed to bark and smoke before the barrel had even cleared the leather. A hundred yards ahead Tom Tabor's arms jerked skyward. His body stiffened in the saddle as the horse plunged on, then toppled over backward, crashing to the canyon floor in a broken heap.

"That was for the sheriff—right through the heart!" The Kid spoke. Then he turned to Alice, Hodar and me. "Git up toward the canyon wall," he said. "I'll stand 'em off as long as I can."

He flopped on his stomach, settled himself behind a little knoll waiting for the Indians. He was cool and nerveless as he twirled the barrels of his Colts looking to their loading.

An arrow throbbed through the air and stabbed into the hillock beside the Kid. An eagle feather bobbed from behind a rock down the canyon. The Kid's gun kicked. Where the eagle feather had been a bronzed arm reached upward, fingers clutching at the rock. Behind it an Indian brave twitched in death spasm.

A MOMENT of silence followed, then suddenly human hell broke loose. Thousands of Indians brandishing spears, bows and firing antiquated guns, charged through the gorge. Those on foot leaped over rocks, fired at us from perilous vantage points up the escarpment of the canyon.

Horsemen thundered toward us breaking the clatter of wild mustang hoof beats with blood curdling war cries. The mixed Hopis, Apaches and Zuni warriors rode like mad men, without saddle or bridle, guiding their horses with the pressure of bare bronzed legs. Their half naked greased bodies flashed in the dying sunlight like some fantastic scene taken out of the past.

The Colorado Kid's guns spat lead and fire like mad. The savages ahead came on in waves, indifferent to the Kid's precise aim. Horsemen came on half circling us. Other sinewy figures

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flitted swiftly from rock to rock, hurried by the Kid's whistling gunshots.

"Good Lord," Hodar shouted despairingly. "We're gonners. The Kid can't stop them."

"Get back!" yelled the Kid grimly.

Amidst the wild shouts of the Indians as they rapidly rode upon us, I heard another sound—the clear call of a bugle echoing up the canyon.

"The Government Cavalry!" I shouted.

"They're riding right into the trap," hissed the Kid. "We ain't got time to warn them."

The main body of attacking Indians were now less than a couple of thousand yards down the canyon. The entire tribe was in the Canyon—just what I wanted. Meanwhile the Kid's capable guns were holding off the advance riders.

Suddenly I ran to the Kid, shouting, "Stop fire! We don't want to kill anymore. Let me handle the Indians now."

The Kid glared at me in astonishment.

"Think you can talk 'em out of scalping us?" he said satirically.

"Stop firing!" I shouted.

Then, to everyone's sheer amazement I grabbed a gun and raced like mad across the floor of the canyon—toward the oncoming warriors.

"Oscar!" Hodar shouted in a frenzied voice.

CHAPTER IX

Synthetic Shock

I COULD have done better with a pinto, but I ran as fast as I could despite the frantic shouts from Hodar and the Colorado Kid. Maybe they didn't know what I was doing, but I did. I had to reach the end of my dynamite fuse before the Indians. It was touch and go for a few seconds.

The main line of redskins thundered up, their horses shaking the earth under me with throbbing hoofs. Finally I reached the dynamite line. Even then I realized my chances of success were slim. I had been working on a hunch that I could stop those Indians. Would it end their racial amnesia?

I knew that amnesia was the result of a shock. The redskins as a whole had been shocked into amnesia by an administration of *Tincture Argalli spicati Colorado* and Epinephrine. The latter, when given in overdoses, acts upon the adrenal glands, giving the entire nervous system a tremendous shock.

Could I shock them back to normal by jarring their nervous systems externally—with dynamite?

I held my breath and almost prayed as I lit the tail end of my fuse. The line sputtered, hissed like a live snake. The trail of fire and smoke slithered along. Then it hit the first dynamite packet, a small one.

Boom! The earth and dust bloomed into the air. The noise of the explosion echoed in the canyon. An instant later packet number two went up. BOOM! The rocks along the canyon wall reverberated.

I raced back to my friends shouting orders hoarsely. "Down, for God sakes, lay down! Flat on your stomachs!"

I saw the Kid drag Alice Stockton down, then I flopped beside Hodar. And just in time. Hell really broke loose in the canyon. The powder fuse ripped along now, touching off packet after packet of dynamite, each one larger than the other, from one sheer escarpment to the other.

The earth trembled and rumbled around us as the charges blasted skyward. Detonation after detonation,

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enormous concussions of sound banged from wall to wall along the canyon until the air seemed to be just a solid mass of convulsive deafening sound.

My ear drums pained me almost to a point of madness while the swirling, tortured air rushed above us. The exploded dynamite packets built up toward a tremendous, earth shaking crescendo, the blasts echoing, reechoing and magnifying from the canyon walls.

The noise was so terrific Hodar just gasped and stared at me. Then gradually, like thunder muffling in the skies after a storm, the sound and fury subsided.

"Look," the Kid suddenly shouted. "The Indian attack has stopped dead in its tracks!"

HODAR, the girl and the Kid gazed up the canyon. The looks on their faces were those of absolute unbelief. Hodar shook his head as if he doubted his senses.

The redskins were standing around, looking very bewildered, like people waiting in a dentist's office. The concussion had blown most of them from their mustangs but no one appeared injured. They milled around in little groups, not quite able to understand why they were in Echo Canyon or why they were wearing war paint, war bonnets and carrying arms.

A small war party of Sioux from Colorado's Mesa Verde Reservation sat on rocks and wept in a taciturn Indian manner because they were so far from home. Not one seemed to remember what had happened during the last few days.

"Oscar, how'd you know the dynamite would shock them back to normal?" Hodar asked.

"The echo," I said. "I had to devise a tremendous shock to overcome the amnesia, particularly three generations of it. I figured if Echo Canyon had any echoes in it, they'd build up the dynamite explosions loud enough so I wouldn't have to explode the stuff in dangerous sizes. I didn't want all the Indians killed. They're the only 100 per cent Americans in this country. The rest of us are just patriots."

The clatter of galloping horses stopped any further word I might have to say on Americanism for the real first line defenders of the country came up in the body of the U. S. Cavalry Unit. A trim young officer dropped from his horse and saluted us.

"Captain Fort, U. S. Cavalry," he said. He glanced toward the subdued Indians who were now busily setting up a peaceful camp in the canyon against nightfall. "What's happened to the Indians? They're quiet now."

The Colorado Kid paused a moment to undo his arm from around Alice Stockton's waist. He then introduced us to the Captain who was apparently a friend of his and explained in brief what had happened.

"So you got Tabor?" said the Captain. "I rounded up his men as they came through the canyon." Then he turned to me with a smile and a handshake that was easily worth two Congressional Medals. "What gave you the idea Tom Tabor was behind all this?" he asked.

I PREENED myself pardonably, saying, "My nose—eighty per cent credit goes to my Martian nose. My brain did the rest. It was so simple it sounds complicated."

"Come on, Oscar, get down to facts," Hodar interrupted.

"It was simple," I repeated. "First of all, Sheriff Stockton fell into some information about the secession plot and this business of starting race riots by doping the Indians. He went to see

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Tabor the day of the rodeo. Maybe he knew Tabor was involved. Maybe he didn't."

"If the Sheriff didn't know about Tabor," the Colorado Kid interrupted helpfully, "Tabor was still worried that Stockton knew too much anyway."

"So he was murdered," I said. "Perhaps Greco fired that arrow so it would look like Indians. It doesn't matter. Then, when the Indian, Bill Running Wind, rode into the ranch and went berserk, hit by racial amnesia, only Tabor and I were there. That was when I smelled the first inkling of the plot. The Indian had just drunk some water. It was doped . . .

"Meanwhile Hodar had gone into town to meet the Governor. Greco went along on Tabor's orders. They had seen Hodar foil the lynch mob only a few minutes earlier and thought he was too dangerous. At that time Tabor still figured I was a freak and not too important. So they framed Hodar on the charge of murdering the Governor . . . Greco pulled that murder!"

I paused a moment, fussing in my pocket, finally pulling out the wad of powder burned paper that had dropped from Greco's holster.

"Here's the proof," I said.

Captain Fort glanced at the paper oddly. "That doesn't look like anything," he said.

"It doesn't!" I snapped. "Well, Greco wrapped this wadding around a .32 caliber shell, the kind Hodar used in his gun, so that he could fire the bullet from his .44. If you don't believe it's possible to fire a small caliber shell from a larger gun ask any ballistatic expert, or try it yourself."

Hodar looked at me and sighed, "Thanks, pal!"

"When the Colorado Kid and I went to the Reservation after we heard Boss Humbolt arousing the people to race riot (and by the way, Captain, you can pick up the boss in Cell 3, Caxton jail) we were really in the case.

"I discovered the drug formula Tabor used to induce racial amnesia in the Indians. He had agents on all the Reservations dishing it out. All part of his network. I tried it on a dog. The dog got amnesia, being bounced back to where he was nothing more than a wolf.

"By this time, Tabor was getting worried about me," I continued. "He sent bloodhounds out to trail me. Well, the hounds might have torn me to pieces if they hadn't realized that I was their hero, Oscar of Mars. That made me suspicious of Tabor. He tried to say he sent the dogs after Alice. If he had, they would have passed me up with a business-like nod because I myself was on Alice's trail."

Even now the Colorado Kid looked doubtful.

"That ain't much grounds for suspicion," he said. "Considering your nose and what hound dogs think of it."

"Yes," I replied. "But then we really started tying Tabor in. After we captured Boss Humbolt and got all the evidence on the secession plot Tabor began exposing himself. He tried to keep us from the canyon when you rescued us from the Indians. He wanted the cavalry unit smashed. Then at the canyon he lost his head, thought he was trapped there and let it slip when he said, *'They've got amnesia. Come on, let's get out!'*

"Right then I knew Tabor was La Cabeza. The chief of the secret Western Mounted Reserve was the only one who actually knew exactly what was happening to the Indians—that was Tabor. Then I figured, if we made him think he was cornered in the canyon, he'd admit it himself."

I glanced toward the Colorado Kid

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for confirmation of my words, but he was nowhere about. Then I spotted the Kid and Alice Stockton a little ways off, their heads bent together somewhat awkwardly as they watched a new moon rising over the dusky canyon rim like a thin curving fingernail. They didn't fool me—not at all. That was an Earth ritual—spooning—I think they call it.

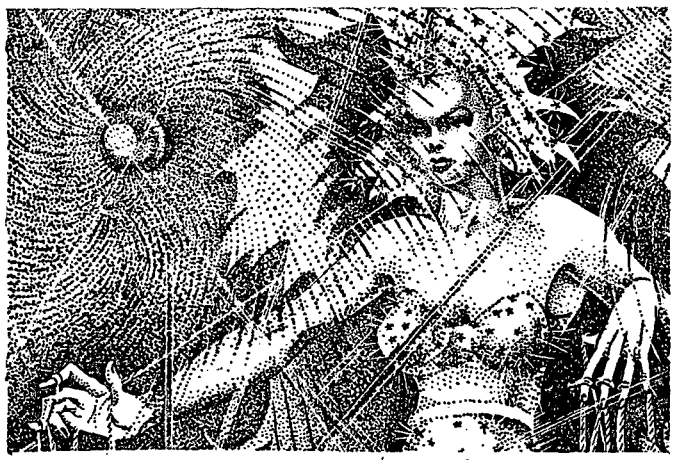
"Dad gummit!" I said, slipping into the vernacular of the great open spaces. "Thought for a spell I'd have a chance to run for Sheriff of Sugar Creek and Caxton, but it 'pears like the Sheriff's daughter is roping a real sheriff."

THE WICKEDEST CITY IN THE WORLD

THROUGH the long development of America we've had our dangerous, wicked cities. Tombstone in the old days, Chicago in the modern days; but we've never produced anything to equal the record established by a city called Irkutsk, in Siberia. Though possessing a population of but one hundred thousand people, it averages two murders a day, rain or shine.

Irkutsk completely eclipses the vaunted wickedness of such lovely little spots as Port Said, Tripoli, or Shanghai. Civil government was so lax for a period that a collection of the most notorious thugs and cutthroats in Europe banded together and took over the town in the guise of a vigilante movement. For years terror walked the streets of Irkutsk. Merchants who refused to pay their "assessments" were shot down like dogs in the street. The city was bled dry eventually and the "vigilants" moved on to an area where there were more lush pickings.

Whatever climatic or geographic conditions make Irkutsk so susceptible to crime is difficult to say. One thing, however, is sure. Their Chamber of Commerce will have to do miraculous work if they ever want to make a summer vacation-land out of their grim city.



Enchantress of Lemuria!

by

Stanton A. Coblentz

Here is the master work of a master story-teller! Even Coblentz's "The Sunken World" is outdone in this new story of a world far beneath the earth's surface, and a weird, enchanting girl who rules the destinies of its subterranean reaches. By all means don't fail to read this fantastic masterpiece in the September issue.

SEPTEMBER ISSUE

AMAZING STORIES

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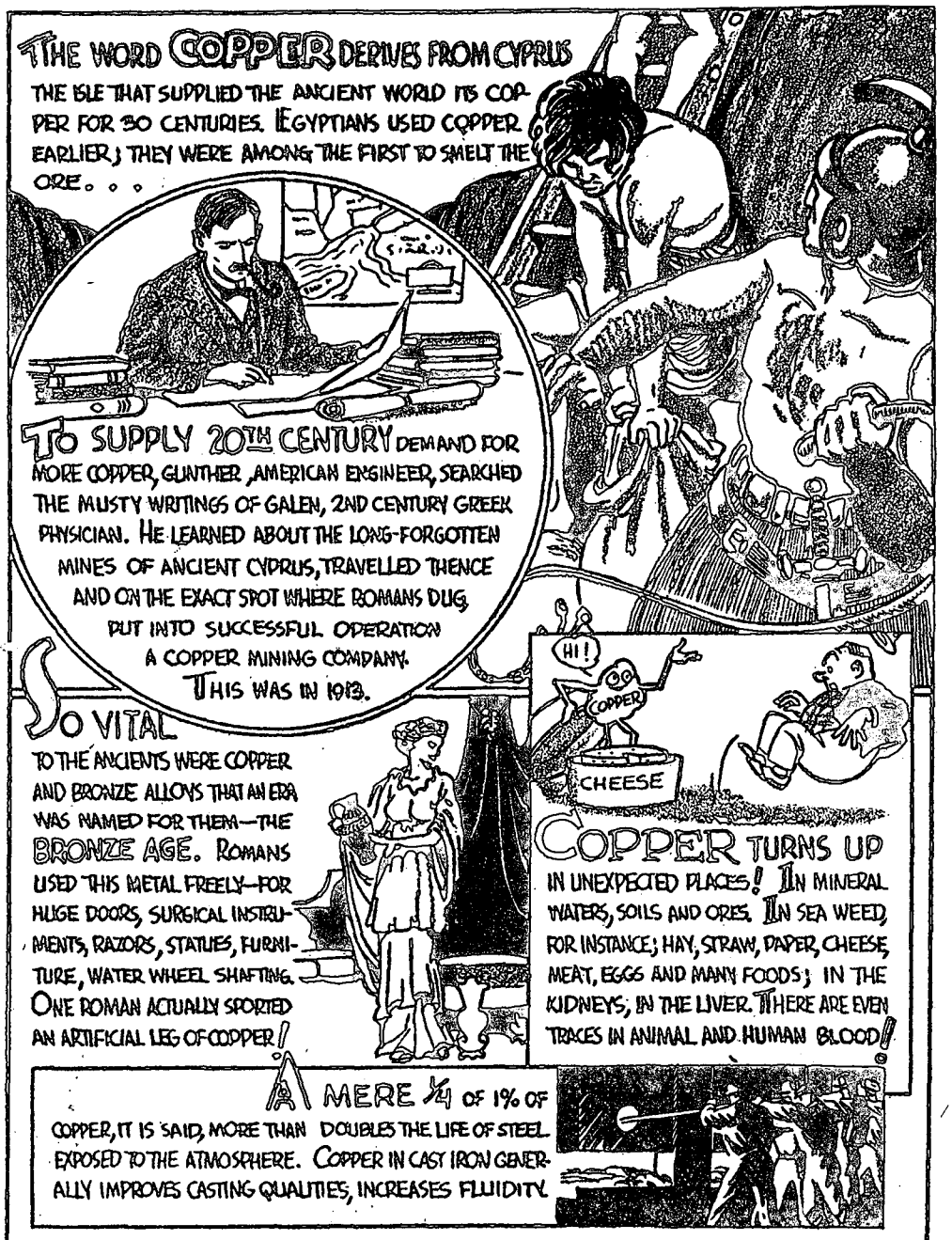
Romance of the Elements---Copper



COPPER is number 29 in the International Table of Atomic Weights. Its symbol is Cu and its atomic weight is 63.57. Copper is red by reflected light and greenish by transmitted. Its melting point is 1083° and its density 8.93. It is one of the most malleable and ductile of metals. It corrodes slowly in air and a coat of basic green carbonate forms. Used extensively in all important industries.

NEXT MONTH—The Romance of Bromine.

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Dunkirk became a hell of cursing, dying men, bursting shells and roaring Stukas

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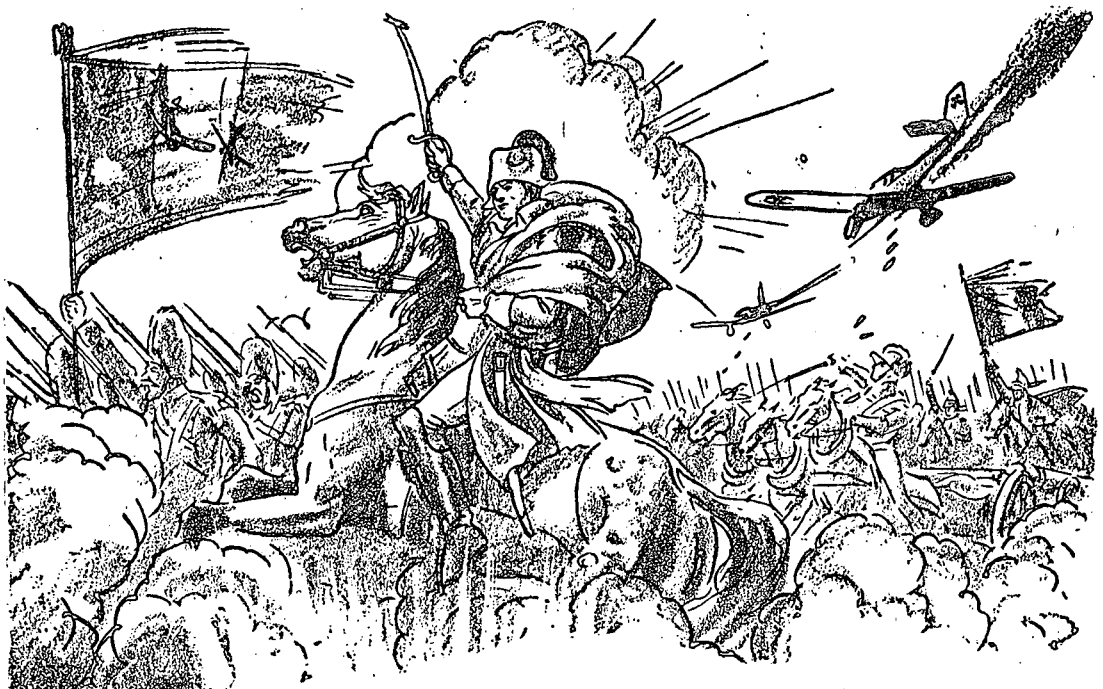
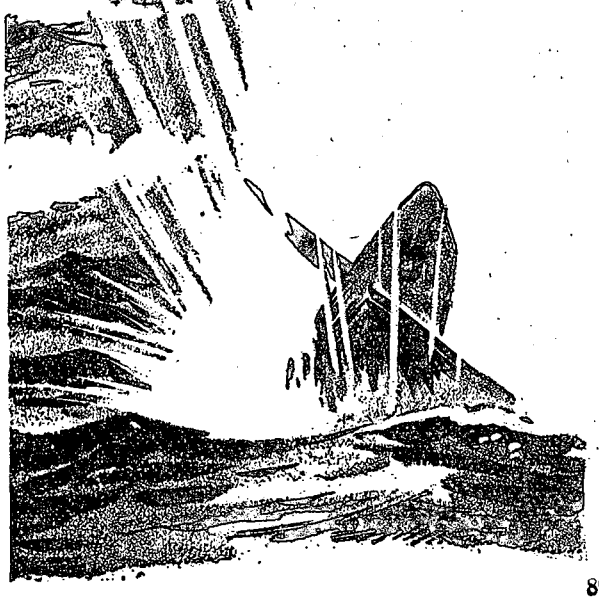


by JOHN YORK CABOT

Who was the inspired military genius who held back Nazi mechanized might while the British turned defeat into honor and glory?



MAYBE this story should start in the summer of 1940, on the blood-drenched beach at Dunkirk, where valiant men cursed and dying men moaned to the screaming thunder of bursting shells and death roaring Stukas.

Or perhaps it might begin over a hundred years ago, when a ghostly gray fishing sloop slipped stealthily through a pea soup fog enshrouding a tiny desolate island called Saint Helena.

But it might be better for the clarity of the facts I am going to place before you, if I start where it began for me, on a tranquil country road in France, some fifty miles from one of the sec-

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tions of the Maginot Line, just about a year ago—

Excerpt from International Press Dispatch:

". . . this war, so far, has been nothing but a 'war of nerves.' True, there has been some slight skirmishing in the sectors between the Maginot Line and the Siegfried Line, but amused Parisians, hearing of such encounters, shrug their shoulders and say that they are merely efforts on the part of French troops to drive away boredom."

The above lines are taken from a dispatch cabled by me to my New York office at the end of April, 1940. I bring them forth merely to indicate the state of mind among all of us in France just before the start of the mechanized *blitzkrieg*. It was less than a week after I had cabled this dispatch, that I was returning—with a group of fellow newspapermen—from an inspection of one of the Maginot Line's superb fortresses.

The car in which I was riding was an open one driven by a French infantryman. Somehow or other, the only companion riding in the back with me was an English journalist from the London Times. The other reporters had crowded into the front cars of our motorcade in order to pump the French officers into tipping news items for dispatch to impatient editors on the other side of the Atlantic. The Englishman—his name was Fellows—was commenting on the peaceful serenity of the French farmlands through which we were passing.

I was half-listening, half-dozing, in the comforting warmth and freshness of spring sun and air, when a sudden "pop" snapped me awake. At that same instant, our army car lurched to an abrupt stop and our chauffeur-soldier climbed out, looking red-faced and apologetic.

"So sorry, Monsieurs," he announced, "but I am afraid ze tire has struck a nail. It is a leak." We were the last car in the motorcade, and the soldier looked undecidedly after the other vehicles disappearing around a turn at the end of the road. "If you wish to change to another car—" he began.

I looked at the Englishman.

"I don't care to, Fellows," I said. "I'm in no hurry. If you'd like to rush on ahead, don't mind me."

Fellows was tall and lanky, with black stringy hair that seemed always to be in his eyes. He smiled.

"Not at all. No hurry either."

I turned to the driver.

"Go ahead, change your tire. We're in no hurry. The rest can go on without us." I had just spied, about a hundred yards down off the road, what looked like a small country inn. I was plenty thirsty.

"How long will you take?" I asked the driver.

The soldier looked from me to the inn, and smiled.

"You will have time, Monsieur," he said.

I glanced at Fellows.

"Care for a nip?"

The Englishman shook his head.

"Go ahead. I'll just sit here and sop up the sunshine." He leaned back against his seat, closing his eyes.

I shrugged, and moved off down the road toward the tavern. I was thinking, among other things, how monotonous this war was getting and how lucky the boys on the police beats back home were. The one thing I didn't think of—and which would have made a corking good feature in the light of what happened to France later—was the fact

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that the mere changing of a tire would be a fifteen minute task for a member of France's mechanized army.

There were two motorbikes, symbols of the French military police, parked outside the door of the little inn when I stepped up to the door. From the automobile they hadn't been noticeable. I was opening the door when I heard voices from inside, loud and angry.

INSIDE a typical barroom, three people wheeled to face my unexpected entrance. Blue uniforms showed me that two of them were the French military police whose bikes I'd seen outside. The third was a small, withered, droop-moustached little Frenchman wearing a white bar apron over his peasant garb. The faces of all three were flushed, excited. Both policemen had hold of the little proprietor and he struggled futilely in their firm grasps.

"Monsieur," demanded one of the policemen, "who are you and what do you want here?"

Briefly, showing him several cards, I explained myself. After one of them peered out the window and down the road at the disabled army car suspicion left his face.

"Monsieur," he announced with a breathless importance. "Zis son of a pig has just been arrested on suspicion of espionage. I hope you understand it is not a matter for ze Press."

I looked at the withered, droop-moustached little man and tried to picture him as an enemy agent. It didn't register, and I guess I smiled a little at the ludicrous scene.

The policemen noticed my open doubt.

"He has talked against ze Cabinet, against ze Army, against ze Navy. He is pro-German!"

The little droop moustache spoke for the first time.

"It is not so, Monsieur. I am not pro-German. I am merely speaking ze truth when I say ze Cabinet, ze Army, ze Navy, are all inefficient, blundering, and will be 'opeless in ze face of ze enemy until ze Saviour of France takes over!"

"You see, you see!" The military policemen were excitedly turning me into a one man judge and jury. "He speaks of ze Saviour of France, and zat is what ze enemy leaflets call their own leader! He is pro-German!"

The little man with the droop moustache was glaring wildly, almost fanatically, now.

"You must not take me away!" he screamed. "If you do, France will fall!"

"He is also a little crazy," declared one of the policemen, tapping his head significantly. "Dangerous."

"Come along, Armand," said the other policeman. "Be peaceful or we will not wait to shoot you!" He yanked at little droop-moustached Armand's shoulder. "We take you to 'eadquarters were you will be searched like ze pig spy you are!"

And suddenly, in a frantic burst of strength, the little fellow broke from his captors, springing in my direction. He hadn't taken more than four steps before he ran smack into me, as if he'd been making for the door and I was in the way. While the military gendarmes shouted wildly and made for the two of us, I lay on the floor, pushing off the little fellow's wildly threshing body.

FINALLY they dragged him upright, and I managed to get up. I was out of sympathy with Armand, now, as well as out of breath. The police pair apologized profusely and rapidly, cuffing Armand as if to prove their sentiments. Then, before I'd been able to catch enough breath to utter an indignant syllable, the blue uniformed

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pair dragged their little captive out the door with typical French abruptness, leaving me alone in the tiny barroom.

I hadn't time to open the door after them before I heard the roar of their motorbikes and heard them snarl off down the country roadway with their prisoner.

"Well I'll be damned—" I began, and the sentence suddenly choked off as I was smoothing my suitcoat. There was a bulge inside my inner pocket which hadn't been there when I'd entered the tavern!

For a moment time seemed to hang suspended. I felt a sudden unreasonable icy sweat break out on my forehead as my hand carefully patted that bulge. I don't know why, but at that moment I couldn't bring myself to look into my inner pocket. For it was obvious that little droop moustache had placed those papers there—if they were papers — after he had deliberately sprawled into me. And Armand was under arrest on suspicion of being a spy!

For an instant, while my heart hammered double duty, I debated what course of action to take. I could step outside and turn the papers over to our chauffeur-soldier, who would see they reached the police. Or I could keep them until we got back to the city. Once there, I could lock myself up in my hotel room and give the stuff a thorough going-over. If Armand were a spy, there would be dynamite—possibly—in these papers.

I debated only another instant, then stepped out the door. The tire was just about fixed by the time I arrived at the army car, and Fellows had fallen fast asleep.

The bulge in my pocket seemed as big as a knapsack all the way back. But I was very casual and unconcerned. For I was a newspaperman and I wasn't drawing my salary from the French Secret Service.

And maybe I'd have the first scoop of this man's war!

CHAPTER II

I Read an Incredible Document

THE blinds were drawn tightly, and I made sure that my room door was double locked. All through the early part of the evening I had been carrying Armand's papers around with me, since I hadn't been able to dodge my newspaper cronies without attracting suspicion. Finally, however, at one of the cafes, I'd pleaded a splitting headache and made my exit.

Every step of the way back to my hotel had been measured by the swift thumping of my heart. And from every darkened niche along the alleys I'd expected a member of the French Secret Service to pop forth. However, in spite of a qualmy stomach, I made it unmolested.

Now, with slightly shaking fingers, I sat down at a table in the corner of my room and spread the thick packet of papers out flat on the table. They were wrapped in a kind of paper walleting, across the front of which was written, in ink that had long ago faded to a faint yellow, "Property And Trust Of Armand DuPois—1821!"

The tremble left my hands and I felt a swift flash of annoyance and disappointment. What in the hell was this? Family papers? I recalled that the front of droop-moustached's inn bore a sign lettered "DuPois Inn, Fine Wines," and so I knew instantly that droop-moustached Armand's forebearers, to whom these papers must have originally belonged, had first names identical to his —an old French custom.

I knew now, with a disgusting sheep-

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ish feeling, that I had overestimated the little peasant Armand DuPois. My first impression of him had been correct. He wasn't a spy; merely a little crackpot. His frantic efforts to pass off these family heirlooms onto me had been nothing more than an expression of his mental instability.

"However," I muttered, trying to soothe my injured pride, "I might as well look into 'em. Might be some especially clever form of code."

I turned the wallet-like cover of the sheaf, and saw the same name written on the inside, in the same hand and same faint ink as before. But there was something else.

"Armand DuPois," it read, "Physician To The Emperor!"

I blinked. So little droop-moustached's great-great granddaddy had been a doctor, and a physician to an Emperor at that. No wonder the little guy—even though slightly loony—had such an attitude about these papers. My disappointment was leaving me, for I knew that these documents would probably at least provide an interesting and somewhat historical evening.

GENUINELY interested, now, I turned the page. Turned the page and was about to read on when I suddenly realized: Armand's great-great grandpappy could easily have been—yes, of course—*physician to none other than Napoleon Bonaparte!*

The date on the front had been 1821. But that was the year, if my history hadn't failed me, that Napoleon died on Saint Helena. I frowned. There were other Emperors running around at that time, or at least comic opera rulers who called themselves Emperors. But DuPois was as French as champagne and the Eifel Tower. Which would indicate that it might be Napoleon to whom the original Armand DuPois administered. He might possibly have been the physician at Napoleon's deathbed.

Hastily now, I turned another page. The entry at the top hit me smack in the face.

February 4th, 1821—Received permission to join my Emperor's staff on Saint Helena. Will arrive there in ten days. My joy knows no bounds. I am certain our plan will succeed.

I gulped. Then I was right. This original Armand DuPois had really been the last medico to attend the Great Bonaparte. I went hurriedly on.

February 16th, 1821—After satisfying my identity with the English governor of Saint Helena, a nasty tempered person named Sir Hudson Lowe, I settled in my quarters. In the afternoon I spoke to the Emperor for the first time in these many months. There were guards present, so we could not discuss the plans, but the Emperor's manner indicates plainly that he knows why I have come.

Two more entries were commonplace, then there was this one:

March 2nd, 1821—I have as his physician, ordered the Emperor to bed. It is quite in line with our plans, and gives me more time to talk them over with him. In the evening I gave him the first of the pills. No suspicion has been aroused as yet. Sir Hudson Lowe, although delighting in petty persecution of the Emperor, is a dull person.

Again there were more commonplace entries. Until this:

April 3rd, 1821—Arrangements have been made, I learned through my special source today. The first pill has given the Emperor all the symptoms I hoped it would, and today I gave him the second. He appears to be sinking fast, which is just as I hoped he would. Even dull-witted Sir Hudson Lowe has let up on his persecution somewhat,

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seeming to sense that the Emperor is dying. The Emperor's trust in me is implicit. I cannot fail him. I will not.

Other entries, written in the same precise hand, in the same yellowed ink, went on to describe Napoleon Bonaparte's rapid wasting away. I couldn't help but be puzzled over the original Armand DuPois' elation at the swift sinking of Bonaparte. It seemed decidedly strange. Then there were these entries:

May 3rd 1821—Today, as his remaining old friends stood beside his bed, the Emperor passed into unconsciousness with these words: "mon fils . . . l'armée . . . Desaix." On seeing the tears of the scant faithful who stood beside him, it was all I could do to keep from reassuring them. But my lips must stay sealed. The moment arrives.

May 4th, 1821—The Emperor has remained in a coma. I have been at his bedside constantly, but for the appointed two hours when I returned to my quarters. The Substitute was there when I arrived. He was cold, wet, and shivering from his dip in the sea. His boat had slipped but close enough to the island rocks to enable him to swim the rest of the distance. He was not observed. I was amazed at the physical similarity between the Substitute and the Emperor. Those on the outside did their work well. I hope I have been as successful. The Substitute was quite calm as I handed him the poison. There was pride, not fear, in his eyes when he drank it. He died almost without pain. I concealed his body carefully in the room. He was a patriot.

May 5th, 1821—The Emperor "died" today. Even the stupid calm of Sir Hudson Lowe was shaken by his "death." It was simple, after the furor resulting in my pronouncement of death, to exchange the body of the Substitute for that of the Emperor. Everything and everyone on this tiny little islet is under great excitement. All vigilance is relaxed, just as we supposed it would be. I have concealed the Emperor in my room. He is still heavily drugged from the pills, and although I am certain that he lives, it is impossible to detect his breathing. Tonight, at nine, the fishing sloop will be lying off the rocks. A heavy fog has already risen, giving us aid when we shall need it most. God is with us.

I READ the last line of that entry, and sat back, fishing nervously for a cigarette. Somehow I felt badly in need of one. The quiet power of these passages had hit me with pile driver force. This stuff was old, ancient almost; it didn't have a thing to do with me, or where I was, or the war that the world was facing at the moment, but if all this were true, absolutely authentic, what a magnificent story had slipped through the fingers of history!

My respect for little, frantic, droop-moustached Armand DuPois multiplied a million-fold by the mere reading that I had done so far. If he were a descendent of the original Armand DuPois who took part in this staggering adventure—and there was no reason to suppose that he wasn't—he certainly had reason to treasure these papers.

And they seemed real enough. I wasn't an authority on ancient documents, but I could sense something in the very undramatic phrases running along the weathered sheets, that screamed that there was nothing here but tranquil statements of authentic, staggering, unknown history. A newspaperman, if he's any good at all, gets to have a sort of a sixth sense in judging the fraudulent from the genuine. Sometimes it goes back on him. But I was certain, now, that my sixth sense was hitting on all ten cylinders.

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Rapidly, almost breathlessly, I flipped the page and looked down on another set of those yellowed notations. Gone now was any realization of where I was or why. I knew nothing but a burning desire to get on with this incredibly fascinating saga. The next entry made my eyes pop out.

May 27, 1821—(France). These past days have been hellish nightmare. Once we had the Emperor aboard the little fishing sloop and were well away from Saint Helena, I was foolish enough to believe that our mission was almost successfully completed. But I had not reckoned with the treachery that was to bring disaster to our plans. I am still uncertain how it came about, or where the leak in our sacred secrecy started, but I am certain that the patrol ship which picked up our trail four days away from Helena had been deliberately sent after us.

We managed to run from them for two days—I don't know how we did it—and on the night of the second day, we met in the cabin below to decide on some way out. It was certain that we would be caught by morning, and that would be sheer tragedy. We dared not put in at our appointed landing place, for undoubtedly those who waited for us there were already jailed.

For our own lives we cared naught. We would gladly give them for our Emperor. We were determined that he should not again fall into the hands of the enemy. (The Emperor, that night, was resting comfortably but had not yet emerged from the sleep produced by my drugs).

All our plans had been based on the certainty we felt that the Emperor would be welcomed triumphantly by his people. But now the alien powers that ruled France had proved too cunning, too strong, for us to hold such hope.

And then it was decided. Two of us—under cover of fog—placed the Emperor in a small boat that night and left the fishing sloop, heading for the coast. Those left aboard the sloop vowed to carry on the flight until we were safe. We knew not what to expect when we landed the Emperor on the coast. But from there we would have to do our best.

Through heavy seas, that night, we guided our small boat and its precious cargo, finally making a small and desolate beach. The pursuing Patrol ship hadn't noticed us leave, thank God.

Living like hunted animals, we succeeded in doing the impossible, finally finding refuge in a country inn three days later. We were successful in passing off the blanket swathed Emperor as a sick relative.

We seem safe here in this inn, and the proprietor is an old soldier who served with the Emperor in Moscow. As soon as it seems safe, it will be necessary to take him into our confidence. I would rather not do so, but we must.

April 10th 1821—Today I could have cried for joy. The Emperor has awakened from his sleep! I was at his side, and he reached for my hand, saying, "Armand DuPois, you have served France and your Emperor well." Gladly would I have died at that instant, so great was my happiness. Soon we will have him nursed back to normal strength.

I TURNED the next page and cursed. The yellowed sheet was blurred, as if water had been spilled on it, making it completely illegible. So was the next page, and the next page after that. Then, finally, there was another unblurred entry.

February 3rd, 1882—We have agreed that my plan is best, the old soldier, my comrade Jacques, and the Emperor himself. For several months now we

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have arranged the necessary precautions. Obviously, things are not ready in France to permit the Emperor's return right now. We don't know when the stage will be set. But when it is, we will be prepared for it. Today, the Emperor is readying himself for the completion of my scheme. He is quite calm, and has infinite faith in me. I shall not fail him, nor will I fail France. Tonight the plan will be completed. The rest lies in the lap of the future.

Feverishly, now, I turned back to the first of the blotted yellow pages. On their smeared surfaces there was probably a complete explanation of this mysterious "plan" spoken of in the final entry. But try as I might, there was apparently no way in which I could bring those blurred, faint words back to legibility.

I wanted desperately to know what that "plan" had been, and what had happened, or been done, to Napoleon Bonaparte on the night of February 3rd, 1822.

Carefully, I picked up one of the blurred pages—after separating it from the rest—and carried it over to the fire, holding it before the blaze. I suppose I had some hazy idea that the heat might make the ink stand out more plainly. But it was no go.

I sat down before those papers again, leafing through them, trying to catch a word, or a phrase, that might indicate what I wanted to know.

It was grotesque, I'll grant you that. The entire phenomena was warped. Here I was in a hotel room of a little French town, sitting on the crater edge of what might be the most tremendous war in history. And yet I was feverishly mulling over some musty papers which told an incredible yarn that contradicted history. An incredible yarn that was just about as closely connected to my life as the origin of the Egyptian pyramids.

Perhaps it was all due to the terrific strain under which everyone in Europe had been laboring during the past months, a strain to which I had been subjected like everyone else on this hapless continent. Probably, at that moment, a due bill from a tailor or a statement of the financial status of the New York Board of Trade would have served as the same outlet for my steam. At any rate I was excited.

And something told me it was due to more than mere nervous tension. Something—call it the very dramatic aura of those yellowed sheets if you like—made me certain that the papers of Armand DuPois were as alive and vital as a bomb.

I don't know how long I sat there mulling through those papers. I'm not sure what length of time I wasted in speculation over the mystery at which they hinted. But I do know that suddenly, and with startling return to reality, someone was pounding heavily on the door of my room.

There is no explanation for my next movements. Rising quickly from my chair I swept up the wallet-like sheaf of papers and hurried over to a cabinet by my bed. Opening the drawer of the cabinet as noiselessly as I could, I tossed the papers inside. Then I turned, feeling foolishly guilty, and crossed over to the door. The person outside was still hammering on it.

Fellows—the English newspaperman—was standing there in the dingy little hallway when I opened the door. His face was flushed, and the placid calm that had been a part of his personality was gone completely. He was visibly excited and breathless. He wasted no words.

"Hell is loose, man. The Maginot Line has been flanked. German divi-

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sions are pouring into France like a tidal wave!"

CHAPTER III

France Invaded!

HEADLINE, Herald-Examiner—

BLITZKRIEG LAUNCHED, 100,000 TROOPS LOCKED IN COMBAT! BATTLE OF FRANCE AT LAST UNDER WAY. MAGINOT FORTRESSES REPORTED ENCIRCLED.

Troops clogged the road leading to the constantly changing "front," and refugees by the thousands added to the confusion and hysteria in their frantic retreat. When I had dashed from my tiny hotel room on Fellows' heels, I'd instantly noticed the change that had come over the little town. Even then, although Fellows told me that action had been under way for over three hours, the peasants were evacuating the town in terror.

Now we were in a two-seater, chugging along the crowded roads as rapidly as the traffic snarls permitted. Fellows was at the wheel, and as he piloted us around the pitiful baggage carts and loaded wagons of the unfortunates in flight, he told me briefly that he'd been asleep in his own rooms when the news had arrived. No one had bothered to wake him, and the other correspondents were headed for the front inside of fifteen minutes. As soon as he'd learned what had happened, he'd gotten hold of a car, and in passing my hotel, saw my light burning and figured I, too, was ignorant of the turn of events.

Fellows narrowly avoided hitting an old Frenchman on a bicycle whose scant belongings were piled high in front of him.

"Decent of you to rout me out," I told Fellows. I was plenty grateful. If I'd missed the boat on this, there'd be another boat inside of a week which I wouldn't miss—one heading back to New York.

Of course by now every last recollection of the papers of Armand DuPois was driven completely from my mind. There was no room for the past when every ticking second of the present was writing graphic history all around me.

I noticed that there wasn't even the flicker of a match along the darkened roadway on which we were crawling. Of course we drove without lights. That was another reason for the snail's pace to which we were forced. We could only see about ten yards ahead, and Fellows was jolting those brakes down pretty constantly.

Overhead there was a sudden drone of planes. Along the crowds jamming the darkened ribbon of roadway one word ran swiftly back to us.

"Alerte! Alerte!"

I felt for my tin helmet at my side, and was heartily glad I'd thought to grab it on rushing from my room. Those planes above, if they were Stukas, would mean business.

"Hope Jerry saves his eggs for the fighting part of France," Fellows remarked tersely. "Hate like hell to see civilians blown to bits. Worse than seeing the same thing happen to soldiers, somehow. Saw a lot of civvie arms and legs flying about in Spain a year or so back."

AHEAD of us, through the inky blackness of the night, I could hear the rumble of cannons and the occasional detonations of bombs hitting somewhere. I was wondering how things were going up there, and what kind of a yarn I'd find to send my Bureau when we got close enough to

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the action to sound authentic.

It seemed as though we crawled along in that little two-seater for centuries. Impatience is a hellish thing when there is no remedy for it. And there was no way in the world that we could make any better time than we were. The refugees were thinning out now, however, and we were making increasingly better progress.

"This little wagon will really roar if we can ever get a clear road," Fellows told me. There were less troops on the roads now, and we'd pass a unit about every ten minutes. Those at the front were obviously pretty busy, and there was no time yet for any return. The sounds of battle were growing increasingly louder. The bombs were falling more frequently, too, and through the blackness enshrouding us we were able to catch occasional orange flashes of flames in the distance. I figured them for flares, but I wasn't certain.

It seems curious to me now—although I didn't notice it then—that no one stopped us to demand credentials as we moved along toward the front. The laxity, the lull that brought a false sense of indefinite security, had obviously played a little hell with French military efficiency.

A half hour later, and we were definitely getting close to the thick of it. It was hard to talk to Fellows, now, because of the noise and shattering explosions as cannon thundered closer and closer. Our darkness, too, had lightened, for there were fires in the distance, apparently from blazing barns ignited by incendiary bombs. We were in the farming district, on the same road we'd traveled that very afternoon.

A sudden "chunk" after a terrific explosion about a half mile to our right made Fellows halt the two-seater abruptly.

"Stiff going from now on," he said. "We'd better don these little tin derbies."

I was only too glad that the English correspondent had thought of this, as I grabbed for my tin hat and planked it on my skull.

"That object which struck our machine," Fellows explained, starting the car again, "was a piece of shrapnel. Nasty stuff." He pointed to a ragged hole in the upper right hand corner of our windshield, which somehow I hadn't noticed. "Luckily that's all it did," he shouted to be heard.

The gulp that came to my throat was quite involuntary. Fellows was sitting less than ten inches from the break in that windshield!

We didn't get more than five hundred yards further in our little vehicle. We were at the top of a wooded hill, rounding a turn, when the explosion came. I don't know how close it was, but I remember that my ears were ringing, and I was crawling painfully from the overturned wreckage of our car. There was smoke trailing from the ruins, and Fellows was bolt upright behind the wheel. It had crushed inward on him. There was a dazed, unbelieving expression on his face. A thin ribbon of blood trickled from his forehead.

As I tried frantically to pull him out of the wreckage, I realized with a sudden numbing sensation of horror that he was dead. Three more shells, bursting in rapid succession and all less than five hundred yards from me, made me realize that my sobbing efforts to remove the corpse of the English journalist from behind the wheel of the twisted machine were suicidal.

I STOOD there in the middle of the road, faintly conscious of the fact that my hand was wet and sticky from

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blood, while another shell exploded, closer this time. With the unerring instinct of a hunted animal, I dropped to the ground and covered my head with my hands.

Then I was crawling, painfully, laboriously; inching along that road as rapidly as I could, for up ahead there was a building. I wasn't aware of it as anything but a refuge. And recalling it now, I can't for the life of me imagine why I thought a simple wooden building would shield me from the hell that was screaming all around.

I do remember realizing dimly that this barrage of German shelling must have been a paving process for Panzer divisions somewhere in this territory. Finally I gained the edge of the driveway leading to the wooden structure. I lay there on the ground, gasping for breath.

The shock of bursting shells still banging incessantly in my eardrums made everything seem to wheel dizzily. And then there was a scorching blast of orange flame flashing up before me, while somewhere in a foggy mist there came the thunderous detonation of a vast explosion.

It must have been at least ten minutes that I lay there, knocked out cold by the force, the terrible concussion of the shell that had hit so incredibly close to me. Opening my eyes, I could realize that somehow I was still intact, and that miraculously, my body hadn't been ribboned by shrapnel. Then I saw the building—or what had been the building. There was nothing left but a gaping concrete blob amid black and smouldering soil. Everything else had been torn or blown away. I don't believe that even a splinter of wood was left in place.

My hand rested on a board, and looking down I saw the lettering, *"DuPois Inn Fine Wi—"!* I dropped the piece of sign I'd half lifted, and since the shells were still plopping deafeningly on all sides, began to crawl automatically toward the concrete remnants of that building. I was crawling to find refuge. There wasn't a thought in my mind about the legend of Armand DuPois. As a matter of fact I don't believe I fully realized at that moment quite where I was.

The thundering of shell fire was already diminishing as I let myself drop over the side of the concrete remains of the cellar. For some unaccountable reason—possibly because man can get used to anything—my head was clearing and I was beginning to feel the power to reason logically again.

The cellar was about twelve feet deep, and as I explored it as best I could, I realized that there had been a floored-in, deeper section to it in one corner. Wanting to burrow just as deeply into the earth as I could at that moment, I made for this.

There was a jagged hole about eight feet in circumference around this broken cement overlayer. Gingerly, I let myself down into this narrow confinement. It was damp and cool inside—and dark.

I found a match in my pocket, and shielding it with my hand, I struck it against the wall. The shattered covering overhead was enough to keep the glow from betraying me to anyone outside. I looked at my narrow haven.

There was a coffin-like, solid-stone, crypt in one corner. The stone lid had been shoved off. This was odd enough. But it wasn't what made me gasp in stark astonishment. The reason for the strained, involuntary cry that left my lips was a crest emblazoned on the side of the vacant crypt.

It was the crest of Napoleon Bonaparte!

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CHAPTER IV

Horror at Dunkirk

HEADLINE from News Dispatch—

INTERNATIONAL PRESS SERVICE WRITER FIRST AMERICAN CORRESPONDENT WOUNDED IN ACTION

That headline above was all for me. Four French poilus picked me up out of the ruins of the little country inn exactly one day later. I was unconscious from loss of blood caused by an arm wound. I didn't come around until several days after that. Then I was in a hospital in Paris, with a cable from my Bureau Manager demanding to know when in the hell he was going to get a first-to-be-plugged yarn from me.

He got his yarn, and some of you may have read it. I knew that getting pinked in the arm was not necessarily synonymous with journalistic brilliance, and consequently felt a little embarrassed about it. But I had more on my mind than that. I was remembering, in every last vivid detail, the scene in the ruins of the Du-Pois Inn. That crest still flashed, neon-like, into my mind every time I thought of that night. And I was doing plenty of thinking.

I was wondering if that coffin had always been empty, and if not, how long it'd been empty when I first saw it. Screwy ideas were dancing along the frayed edges of my nerves. I was liable to imagine anything. But I was certain that I hadn't imagined what I saw there.

My dispatches had a Paris date line for the next three weeks of the German *blitz,* for I was mending the injured wing while aching to get another crack at doing something besides collecting wounds. On the fourth week, my New York Bureau cabled, and I left Paris, glad to be headed for possible action.

I didn't know then how much I'd see. On May 25th I filed a dispatch that began like this:

I.N.P.S. (Special) Dunkirk, 5/25/40.

The first divisions of the British Expeditionary Forces straggled into Dunkirk, today, marking the initial success of the Allied Armies to avoid the huge, swiftly closing German pincer offensive. In what looks to be a gallant last stand against the onsweeping hordes of . . .

It was only on the following day that I really awoke to the realization of how tough things were going to be. Hordes of German planes swarmed over Dunkirk, loosing bombs right and left on the dock constructions of the little harbor. In much greater numbers, the weary and gallant remainder of the B.E.F. began pouring into the little town.

But on the next day—the 27th—hell broke out for certain. Thousands upon thousands of soldiers lined the docks and beaches, now. Weary, spent, dogged, but determined, they dug in as best they could on the slight knolls and sand dunes, placing machine guns and anti-aircraft equipment in position to pay back the chattering death which endless swarms of swooping Stukas rained down on their numbers.

Dunkirk is situated on a shallow, sandy coast, and that day was bright and hot. The sun made ever more tempting targets of the men on the beaches. I was there with them. And from outside we got reports that the steel ring of the Panzer divisions was

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closing in more and more tightly. Stragglers of the Senegalese troops, who'd been holding the rear open with the French poilus, began arriving. Resistance was weakening, they said, it didn't look as if it would be humanly possible to beat the enemy off any longer.

Things looked black. This was ghastly history being written.

THE first few French and British destroyers arrived late that afternoon, and the evacuation of the battalions on the docks began. But they were only a few compared to the hordes who prayed and waited on the beaches. And the Stukas were playing up and down the beaches, chattering, chattering, snicking out lives by the hundreds like huge scythes. The German howitzers had gained the range of the beaches, and another hell was added to existence.

The French and British destroyers loaded up until they could carry no more. Other boats would arrive—if they got past the Nazi air swarms patrolling the sky to prevent just that. And where was the R.A.F.?

They were there by nightfall, bless them, and we had our first partial rest from the Stukas. But the howitzers still pounded the bleak sands relentlessly. More boats would come soon, we learned. But that "soon," we expected, would be too late.

The French, holding off the Germans to permit the evacuation, could not last much longer. It was a certainty that they would crack at almost any instant. They had held gallantly, but there is a limit even to heroism.

The night gave birth to a new hell. More swarms of planes, more bombs. Howitzers getting closer range. Twelve knolls beat off attacks by Panzer divisions. No boats.

A beautifully bright moon and a starlit sky revealed the beaches perfectly to the enemy.

I was in a staff hut with four B.E.F. officers and two other correspondents. Those British officers looked pretty grim. But they were going to do one hell of a grand job of dying if their time came. They didn't think the French could hold much longer.

An orderly brought word. He was stained, bloody, dirty. A man from the Devil's Kingdom. He was barely able to salute.

"The French, Sir. Their resistance has stiffened. They're holding, while mobilizing a mechanized drive to sweep through the German flank and reach us on the beaches."

The orderly pitched forward on his face and I saw he wasn't an orderly. He had a Lieutenant's insignia on his tattered tunic. He was taken to a first aid tent a few yards down. The night crawled on, and with the dawn a mist was coming in from the sea, blotting out the sun. The men on the beaches cheered. It meant a chance.

EARLY that day the destroyers arrived, laying down an inner-coastal barrage which was to effectively halt the German advance. Behind the destroyers was the strangest "armada" in history. There were sub chasers, aircraft carriers, transports, motor launches, ferries, yachts, fishing boats, tugs, barges—as incredible and numerous an aggregation of seaworthy vessels as I have ever seen!

By now the weather was terribly murky.

The French had not pounded through to join the evacuation as yet. But the big British sea guns were doing their bit. Men were dashing from the beaches, wading up to their ears in the sea, clambering on rafts, into

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boats. The docks were in bad shape, and evacuation grew more difficult. The beach was too shallow for the destroyers to put in closely. And now came the planes.

Three thousand nine hundred of them—a number I learned later. They might have well been millions! The R.A.F. was performing gallantly against terrible odds. Men on rafts and in open boats mounted machine guns in their craft to beat off the harrowing attacks of those planes. The water ran with red in the sea that day. And then came the French. They had sliced through!

But the ring was drawing closer.

"One French division holding off at a bottleneck near the beach. If they don't fail we can make it," a British officer told me.

I got a little sick—one division!

But still the Nazi troops were held off. Night was falling fast. I was in the staff hut again, when another message arrived. A runner handed a slip to the English commander. He read:

"We're holding. You can count on us. Good luck."

There was a significant silence. Everyone in the hut was thinking of the same thing. They'd be sliced to pieces for this gallantry. The English commander, having read the contents, glanced hastily, unseeingly, at the bottom. He crumpled it and let it drop.

I picked it up surreptitiously, making sure I wasn't noticed, and stuffed it in my pocket. There was a fine yarn here. Good copy.

"We're holding," a masterpiece of understatement. One division remaining, so the others can escape.

HEADLINE, N. Y. Daily News—

MIRACLE AT DUNKIRK—
EVACUATION COMPLETED!

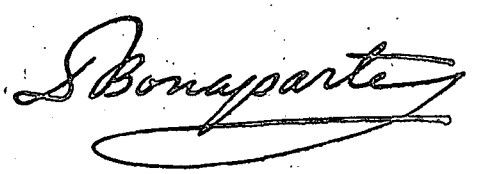
Twelve days after America read that headline, I was back in New York. France fell shortly after this. And with the rest of you I read of a free people's effort to overthrow the yoke of enslavement. You know what I mean by this. I refer to the hints of sabotage by the vanquished against their victors; I mean the reports seeping through rigid censorship to the effect that "underground" armies are being organized; I mean the unexplained ambushings of Nazi patrol divisions along French countrysides. I am thinking of these and thousands of other daily evidences of a free and reborn France rising from defeat.

There are those who say these indications of revolt will soon die, that the heavy boot of the conqueror will stamp out the spark that kindles freedom in the hearths of France. They give their reasons for such conclusions on the premise that France is without a leader, someone who can give the unified strength needed in their hour of peril.

And when they speak this way I think of these things: I recall the legend of a sloop that stealthily left the Island of St. Helena on a foggy, blackened night. I recall a little droop-moustached innkeeper, descendent of a brilliant physician, who kept a strange crypt in his tightly sealed cellar. And I remember a message sent to a British commander on the blood-drenched beach at Dunkirk.

"We're holding," that message said, "you can count on us."

But mostly I remember the signature beneath that message. It was:



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« FANTASTIC ODDITIES »

By GUY FAULDES

LEFT-HANDED?

FOR centuries scientists and psychiatrists have speculated as to the differences in behavior or personality in left-handed people as compared to the right-mitters. Their conclusions have been pretty vague and scientists have disagreed volubly on the subject, but one thing is sure. If you're left-handed, and if those who believe this affects personality and behavorism are right, then you should have a lot in common with Tiberius, Michelangelo, Raphael, Bertillon, James A. Garfield and Leonardo Da Vinci, all of whom used the left hand when writing.

WHERE OLD SOL MOVES BACKWARD

THE sun, the center of our Universe, is usually pretty reliable, but under certain circumstances it becomes possible to watch Old Sol reverse the standard order of things and rise in the Pacific and set in the Atlantic. You have to go to Panama to see this phenomena, but it is certainly worth the trip.

In order to understand this peculiar business, it is necessary to know something of the geography of the Panama Canal. It does not run due east and west, but rather from the northwest to the southeast. Therefore from the canal zone you may see the sun drop into the west—into the Atlantic Ocean. And if you wait long enough in the same spot you will see the morning rise suddenly in the east—from the Pacific Ocean.

This occurrence usually has a bewildering effect on the spectator the first time he sees it, but he soon learns that it is merely the geographical peculiarity of the canal zone that makes Old Sol get out of line, not the native beverages.

RUSTLING GOES MODERN

ONE of the accepted beliefs these days is that the wild and woolly and lawless West has gone the way of the bustle and the mustache cup. To some extent this may be true. The wild, carousing cowboys have been replaced by college boys on dude ranches, who can twirl a lariat or a tea cup with equal facility. Gun fights and border towns have faded into oblivion along with the huge unnumbered herds and unfenced pasture lands.

But one practice of the old west has clung tenaciously, probably because of its lucrative profits. Today, in the streamlined, civilized, "modern" West, more cattle are being rustled than ever before.

The reason is that with the speed-up in transportation facilities the rustlers are able to rustle cattle in one state and have them sold as dressed beef in another state inside of twenty-four hours. Their methods and preparations are infinitely careful and painstaking.

The cattle—worth anywhere from a hundred to one hundred and fifty dollars apiece—are picked up by huge, swift vans and sped to faraway cities. There, they are butchered and sold by illegal operators within twenty-four hours. Sometimes the butcher who makes the final sale to the consumer is completely unaware that he is selling stolen goods. He may buy the beef in good faith from rustlers. The more thorough operators use refrigerated trucks, and butcher and dress the meat enroute.

Sheriffs and cattlemen are helpless against these mechanized rustlers. Fraudulent bills of sale are prepared in the event that the truck might be stopped, and when it is, the sheriff is confronted with air-tight papers proving legal possession of the cattle. By the time a check-up is made and the fraud discovered, you and I are dining on the steaks from the stolen cattle.

But just as rustling has not disappeared from the western scene, neither has the fortitude and courage of the ranchers who make up the West. Today they are strapping on their forty-fives again, and preparing to fight the menace of rustling with the same swift, sure methods they used fifty years ago. To combat this new style raiding they are forming patrols and guard stations to apprehend the rustlers on the spot. Cattlemen will not take these thefts lying down. They have strapped their guns on again and no one doubts they mean business.

Who says the wild west is gone?

MIRACLES OF NATURE

CERTAIN species of the lizard family are equipped with Nature's strangest safety device. When they are attacked by adversaries more formidable than themselves, these lizards operate certain muscles and ligaments which perform a bloodless amputation and leave its brilliantly colored tail flopping about on the ground behind it. This severed tail will flip and wriggle for an hour or more and acts as a bait to attract the attention of the lizard's pursuer. And the lizard? He's calmly and efficiently growing a new tail.

Certain crabs which inhabit the Great Barrier reefs have discovered a unique method of satisfying their hunger. First they capture an anemone and hold it aloft. The anemone's feelers wave wildly in the water and finally ensnare a juicy tid-bit. The crab takes this away from the anemone and holds the anemone up again. It's the same principle we use in fishing, but the results seem to be much better.

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Wilbury's INCREDIBLE

There were three runners in this race: Wilbury, Sakanoff, and an unpredictable scientific gadget!

I WAS running along Snobble road, getting in shape for the four mile cross-country race between Snobble High and Clarence Tech, when the first of the peculiar things happened: smirk-faced Ivan Sakanoff caught up with me and he wasn't breathing hard at all whereas I was puffing like a steam engine. In fact, I was about set to sprawl my tooth-pick frame under one of the trees that lined the road and try a nap.

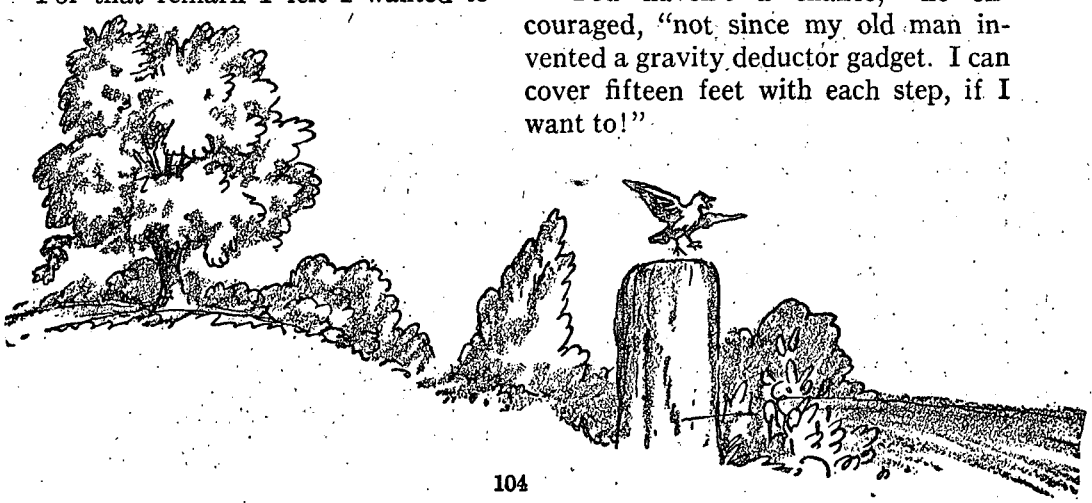
"Hullo, sucker," Ivan greeted snootily, "still think you're going to win the race for dear old Snobble High?"

For that remark I felt I wanted to smack him to the ground. But, as a matter of fact, I had more than the prestige of Snobble High worrying me. I wanted to win the race so that pretty Marge Ann would think I was a hero or something and let me date her sometime. Besides, Marge Ann, who no doubt was the sweetest looking girl I'd ever seen, had promised to go to the victory dance with the winner. Every other fellow in town was madly in love with her, too.

"I *am* going to win the race!" I gritted back at Ivan Sakanoff.

He grinned nastily.

"You haven't a chance," he encouraged, "not since my old man invented a gravity deductor gadget. I can cover fifteen feet with each step, if I want to!"



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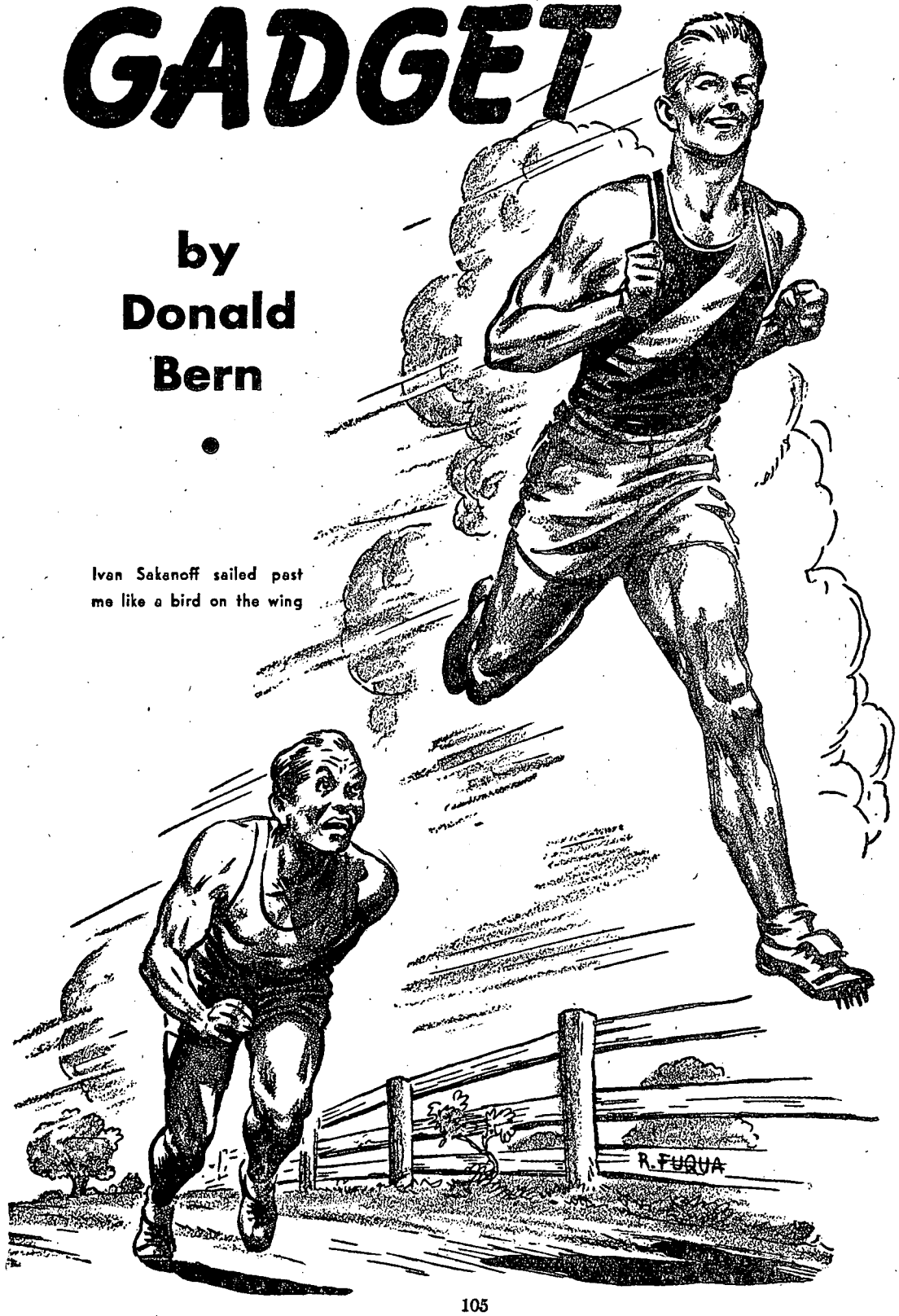
GADGET

by Donald Bern



Ivan Sakanoff sailed past me like a bird on the wing

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"Your old man invented a—which?" I gasped.

All of a sudden Ivan looked a little uneasy, like he was sorry he'd said anything. And it was just then that I noticed something strange. With each running step Ivan was bouncing about three feet off the ground—*and was just coasting through the air!*

"A gravity deductor," Ivan repeated. "Only my old man knows how it works, but when you attach it to something, the thing doesn't hardly weigh anything anymore. It's negative gravity or something. I've got it strapped under my shorts."

Which brings me to explain that Ivan's father was an inventor—just as my father was, only not so good. Always, Sakanoff and his father were putting together peculiar gadgets, inventing ridiculous articles, to make each other jealous. The way they got along was wonderful, and terrible, too.

"That's silly," I scoffed at Ivan, "gravity is gravity and you can't deduct it. I don't believe you have a deductor. Let me see it, Ivan."

The dark-faced dope jumped ahead. "Sorry, Horace," he said happily, "but I promised my old man not to show it to anyone. Now watch me make tracks!"

I watched. One second Ivan was running almost alongside me, then suddenly he began to hop through the air like he had a million bees in his track shorts.

"S'long, Wilbury," he smirked, skimming over the ground and leaving me far behind.

I felt bad. I felt so bad that I stopped running, turned, and started toward home. Ivan Sakanoff would win the race for Clarence Tech. There was no doubt about it. Then pretty Marge Ann would think a lot of Ivan and not much of me. And if there was anything I wanted, I wanted Marge Ann to think a lot of me.

I dropped into the house and spread my weary self over a couch. Staring at the ceiling, I sighed resignedly. And just then there came to me from father's basement laboratory, the muffled voice of Sakanoff—father's friendly enemy!

I thought, maybe father could invent a gravity deductor, too. Then I'd have an equal chance with Ivan. I rolled off the couch and skidded toward the basement laboratory. Through the fog of my thoughts I heard Sakanoff growl:

"Atom Transmitter? Phooey. I don't believe it. Oscar Wilbury, you are a prevaricator!"

I TUMBLED down the stairs and into father's homemade laboratory. Both father and Sakanoff looked at me with some surprise. Father was mild featured, round and plump, and topped by a patch of curly white hair. Sakanoff was dark of face, gruff, powerful, frowning.

"Father," I began, "there's something very important I want to talk to you about . . ."

"Shush, Horace," father shushed, "don't disturb me now. I'm very busy."

"Atom Transmitter," Sakanoff grumbled, "sounds silly."

Father turned to Sakanoff with reproachful eyes. The other's remark seemed to have caused him pain, for after a moment his round blank face became almost stern. Then he indicated a tiny, intricate hodge-podge of wires, radio tubes, lenses, and various other items, all somehow strung together and resting like a peculiar bump of some kind atop the laboratory table.

"I admit that it does not yet transmit atoms with complete efficiency," he muttered stiffly. "There are certain technical errors I've been unable to remedy—"

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"Hah!" Sakanoff gloated. "Why don't you let an inventor work on it?"

Father swallowed, turned red, swallowed again, then continued:

"But on the whole, its basic operation is so simple that even a vacuum skulled primitive like yourself should understand. It breaks down atoms to electrical charges, which in turn are transmitted somewhat in the manner of ordinary radio waves—*it virtually broadcasts a substance, as the common transmitter broadcasts sound.*"

Father hesitated a moment, and Sakanoff growled,

"Go on, go on!" Father went on.

"But the most astounding thing lies in the fact that any ordinary receiving set is able, with slight adjustment, to pick up the radioed matter and form it back to its original shape!"

Sakanoff's eyes suddenly narrowed. Envious fires burned in his deep, dark orbs. Without a word he bent over the tiny apparatus, snooped at it from all angles.

"Humpf!" he humpfed disdainfully. But he wasn't fooling anyone. Sakanoff knew father was on the trail of something hot and he was as jealous as all heck. He sneered around for a while longer and then with a disinterested look on his thick-skinned face made his departure.

"FATHER," I said, "the race is Saturday and I haven't a chance to win it, the way things stand. Sakanoff's outfitted Ivan with a gravity deductor. What I want to say is—maybe you can invent one for me, too. Uh?"

"A gravity deductor?" father squeaked absent-mindedly, his little pale nose bent in concentration over the intricate looking bump that was the Atom Transmitter. Then, after a moment he muttered:

"Reverse progress of ether waves. Negative mass attraction. I wonder what mother has for dinner. Agitation of protons. Eccentric oscillation—meat loaf— Mmmmmmm. Horace, my boy, did you say something? Oh, yes. The race. Mmmmm. My boy, we can make the gravity deductor look like an impractical toy—"

"How, how, how, how," I mumbled hysterically.

Father took time out to blow his nose before answering.

"With my Atom Transmitter, of course," he murmured calmly.

I stared at him hard.

"You mean, you mean you'd *broadcast me?* Transmit me via radio?"

"Uh huh. There's never been anything like it before. You'll cover the four mile course with the speed of light!"

I closed my eyes, murmured:

"Marge Ann, I'm doing this for you!"

PRACTICALLY the whole town of Snobble turned out to see the start of the race. And I knew that four miles away the residents of Clarenceburg were anxiously awaiting the appearance of the winner, hoping that it would be one of their boys of Clarence Tech.

With father I wandered near the starting line, proudly displaying the big black S on my track shirt. I was going to win the race. There was no doubt about it. Father's invention, hidden under my track shorts, was unbeatable. I'd set a new cross-country record, become famous, and then Marge Ann would think I was wonderful.

And it was while I was wandering about in a happy daze, father at my side, that Sakanoff and Ivan barged into us. And clinging to Ivan's arm was pretty Marge Ann! Ivan had his chest out, showing off the big red C on his shirt.

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"Hullo, Marge Ann," I mumbled, blushing a little. Marge Ann's black hair was done up in a thousand little cute curls, each one pretty as a picture. A look from her dark eyes set my heart pattering weakly.

"Hullo, Horace," she returned snootily, turning up her tiny nose at the blue sky. She didn't think I was much.

"Wilbury!" I heard Sakanoff thunder, "I'm betting a hundred dollars that Ivan will win the race! I'm betting that Ivan beats every cross-country record! I'm—"

Father smiled, yanked out his wallet.

"All right, Sakanoff! My hundred is that Horace will win the race." He showed Sakanoff the bills and then stuck the wallet away. Sakanoff smiled confidently—he didn't know that father had perfected the Atom Transmitter and that I had it hid in my shorts!

Then, Sheriff Abbott, who was to start the race, blew a whistle and the Clarence Tech team and Snobble High boys gathered at the starting line.

"Good luck, Ivan," Marge Ann murmured, and then with a wiggle of her pretty little sides she turned and slithered away. I gazed at her back for a second, and then strode determinedly toward the starting line. Ivan whistled happily.

"He won't whistle so much," I muttered darkly, "not after what's going to happen—"

But a lot more happened than I expected, and it all didn't put me into a whistling mood either.

BANG! Sheriff Abbott's revolver barked and the sixteen of us shot forward like we'd been kicked in the pants. A great cheer went up from the crowd and I felt like a hero already. Right off, Spat Druggan, of Clarence Tech took the lead, with Pimplenose Harrigan, of Snobble High second, and Snitcher Black, of Clarence Tech third.

I looked to see Ivan Sakanoff make use of his gravity deductor and skim out ahead of the bunch, but for some peculiar reason he trailed the field, running even behind me. Which wasn't at all the way I wanted things to be—cause if I was going to use the Atom Transmitter I had to be alone and out of sight for a few seconds.

By the time Snobble Town was behind us, Sakanoff and I were trailing the rest by about a hundred yards. It seemed that no matter how slow I ran, Ivan still managed to keep behind me.

"Hey, Wilbury," he yelled suddenly, "aren't you in this race?"

He should talk! I decided to give him a piece of my mind.

"Ivan," I growled back, "it would make me very happy if you would stop admiring the seat of my shorts and shake a leg yourself. I feel terribly sorry for you wallowing in all my dust—"

I stopped running and motioned him past, bowing from the waist.

"I don't know what you're up to, Horace," he snickered, "but I distinctly smell a rat."

"You've got a gravity deductor. Why the deuce don't you use it?" I questioned angrily. This was getting me down, giving me a pain.

Ivan looked at me narrowly, suspiciously. Then he snickered:

"I don't want you to see it."

"All right, you stay here and I'll go on a way," I murmured, seeing my chance to use the transmitter without being detected. Acting on my suggestion, I turned and walked some distance away. Then, of a sudden, I dodged behind some trees and yanked forth the Atom Transmitter. Father's instructions on its use came to my mind. I turned a tiny switch and two pencil shaped tubes glowed dimly. A

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compass needle quivered expectantly as I set a dial. Then everything was all set! In a moment I was going to radio myself to a spot near Clarenceburg!

I PEERED out from the trees to make certain that Ivan wasn't spying on me, then turned back to the gadget.

"Here goes," I muttered, taking a few breaths. I closed my eyes, turned another tiny switch, and—*swooshhh!*

Next thing I knew I was lying flat on the ground, gazing up at the blue sky and feeling like I'd been put through a couple of sawmills.

"What the heck?" I muttered.

Pushing up on my elbows I gazed about goofy-like. All the trees were gone so I knew I'd been transmitted somewhere. Where? I was on a green flat field that was dotted daintily with dandelions. Then a house some distance away swam into my dizzy vision. I rubbed my eyes, blinked, stared, rubbed them again. Still the house looked the same. It was the same. No doubt about that.

"What the heck?" I muttered again, disappointedly.

There was not a doubt about it! The house was that belonging to Farmer Snorter. That meant I was no closer to Clarenceburg than before! I'd moved all right, but *parallel* to Clarenceburg, rather than toward it!

Then—

"Horace!" a voice shrieked. "What the hell you doing here?"

I twisted around. Strolling toward me, looking battered and bruised was —Ivan! Something he held attracted my attention, something awful familiar looking. Forgetting all else I questioned:

"What kind of a gadget is that you've got, Ivan?"

But even before he answered I knew. Because only one kind of gadget could have brought Ivan here so fast.

"This is an Atom Transmitter," Ivan Sakanoff confessed needlessly. "I didn't use the gravity deductor at all!"

"YEAH!" I exclaimed. "I thought so! We both had transmitters! And our radio waves must have interfered with each other or something and caused this to happen to us! We're outta luck! The race must be near the finish by now."

We stood and frowned darkly at each other for a full minute or so. I felt like I wanted to smack him to the ground, and maybe he felt the same way. Then I muttered:

"I'm going to Farmer Snorter's place. He's probably listening to the race. I bet that Pimplenose Harrigan wins by a mile!"

"Phooey," Ivan snickered, "Pimplenozzle is probably wallowing in Spat Druggan's dust—"

We trotted over to Snorter's house and knocked on the door. Inside, I could hear the radio blasting away. Then the door squeaked open and the long bent frame of Farmer Snorter stood there. Funny thing about Farmer Snorter. They say he didn't really grow that long. They say that one lazy morning he was yawning and stretching himself and yawning and stretching himself—and stretching—and that he just remained that way, all strung out.

Now he blinked at us through his thick glasses and said:

"Eh?"

Ivan spoke up:

"Mister Snorter, we want to listen to your radio. We want to hear the end of the race."

Snorter kind of telescoped his figure

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down a bit and looked at us closer. He made me think of a giraffe, somehow.

"Gad," he said shrilly, "aren't ya ashamed ta chase around in yore underclothes. Seems like the world's gone crazy for sure—eh—the race did ya say?"

"Eh-heh," I muttered tiredly, and walked past him into the house, Ivan at my heels. The radio was still blaring as before, the Clarenceburg announcer was cackling with unrestrained vigor:

"Here they come, here they come!" he shrieked. "In another minute this great race will be over and we'll have the winner at the microphone! Two of the boys are far ahead of the others. They're turning into Main Street now, racing past Thatch's ice cream parlor —We can see who they are now! *Horace Wilbury of Snobble High is in the lead—Ivan Sakanoff of Clarence Tech close on his heels!*"

IVAN and I turned from the radio and gaped at each other. Finally Ivan yapped:

"Why, he's nuts! That's us! We're not there, we're here!"

I nodded.

"Yeah, I suppose we are—here. It's a mistake, a goofy error. The announcer is bughouse, that's all. Hah!"

"*Horace Wilbury of Snobble High has just crossed the finish line a step ahead of our own Ivan Sakanoff! Neither boy seems very much winded! —We'll have Wilbury to the microphone to say a few words—*"

"What a dopey announcer!" Ivan grunted bitterly.

"Something is decidedly screwy," I added.

And then—I heard my own voice speaking over the radio!

"*Hullo everybody, this is Horace Wilbury. I'm certainly glad to win the race! Hullo, Marge Ann!*"

My head started to go around in dizzy circles. To make certain that I wasn't dreaming I reached up and tweaked my nose. I was awake.

"Ivan!" I gasped weakly. "Ivan, I'm duplicates! There's two of me. Two Horace Willburys!"

"And two Ivan Sakanoffs!" Ivan squeaked shrilly.

FARMER SNORTER bent over us like a peculiar monster of some sort.

"I think ya both been guzzling apple cider," he drawled. "Why don'tcha go home ta bed?"

Holding to each other for support, Ivan and I staggered out of Snorter's house. For maybe ten minutes we tottered along without saying a word. Then Ivan sat down on the grass and bit at his fingernails. I followed suit. There was nothing else to do.

"This is your fault, Horace!" Ivan snapped. "If your dippy dad hadn't invented such a dumb gadget we wouldn't be in this fix! Now what the hell are we going to do?"

"Duplicates!" I groaned. "What d'ya do when you got duplicates? The Atom Transmitter must have done this to us. The Atom Transmitter made duplicates of us!"

"How the hell you figure that?"

I tweaked my nose thoughtfully. "Since we both had transmitters, some of the waves might have interfered with each other, kind of neutralized each other and landed us here. But some of the waves escaped and went on, forming another Horace and another Ivan. Our duplicates wouldn't know about us."

Ivan scratched his smooth chin, wrinkled his brow.

"We've gotta get rid of them," he growled.

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"Uh-huh," I agreed, thinking hard how it could be done. It was getting kind of chilly sitting around in track shorts. I jealously visualized the other Horace spreading himself over my favorite couch. He was a hero and I was —nothing. Everyone was admiring him. Marge Ann, too! She'd be with him at the victory dance! I felt horrible.

About twenty minutes later I sat up brightly, smacked my right fist into my left palm. I had the solution! I knew how we could be rid of the duplicates! Why hadn't I thought of it before? It was simple! Kid stuff! We had the means right in our hands!

"S'matter?" Ivan grunted, lifting his head. He was awful gloomy looking. I reached out and pulled his ear toward me.

"Listen, Sonny, listen carefully—" A minute passed and Ivan listened. Then, when I was through, he exclaimed excitedly:

"Yeah! It's the only way. We'll do it—and how we will!"

"All right, then," I said grimly, "but don't forget to set the Atom Transmitter the way I told you—"

WE sat around, not saying much, until it grew dark. Then because we were shivering a little, we ran around in circles to keep warm. Now and then the moon peeped out of some black clouds, looked around a bit, and then hid again. Finally, Ivan and I parted company.

I headed straight for where I knew the victory dance would be held—Thatch's Ice Cream Garden! Old man Thatch had been swell enough to offer his garden for the victory dance in the event Snobble High won the race. And Snobble High had won. If my conscience bothered me any, all I had to do was remember that Ivan Sakanoff, on the opposing team, had used the transmitter, too. So all was fair.

Thatch's garden was all lit up by about ten big electric lights, and to me it seemed as though half of Snobble Town had come there to celebrate the victory. From a vantage point, hidden, I watched the crowd push and step all over each other. I was looking for the duplicate of me.

Then I saw—him! *Him,* I say, yet it was *me!* And what made my blood simmer was the fact that hanging on to his arm, like she was sick in love with him, was pretty Marge Ann! She was smiling and laughing up into the other Horace's face and I—he—was grinning happily like a dope. And to top it all —the duplicate was wearing my new white suit! I hunched down a trifle further in my hiding place and gritted my teeth. And waited.

Ten minutes later I had my chance. Marge Ann left the Copy, presumably to powder her tiny nose, and the Impositor stood alone in a dark corner of the garden. A few corners had been left dark for chummy purposes.

Skirting the crowd, taking extreme pains not to be seen, I approached the other Horace. He'd sat down on a wooden bench, obviously waiting for Marge Ann to return. I stole closer, closer— Then I set the Atom Transmitter the way I'd told Ivan to set his.

I took another step closer while my heart pounded so hard it rattled the bones in my toes and my lungs forgot to breath. Then I was on him! Jerking my frame forward, I turned the tiny power switch on the Atom Transmitter, pushed it against the duplicate—

Swooshhh!

There was a brilliant flash of light and something electric wrenched at my arms, jerking me forward and off balance. In an instant I found myself sprawled among the legs of the dancers

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—*and me still in my track suit!*

"Why, why, Horace!" It was the sweet, startled voice of Marge Ann! From my prone position on the dance platform I looked up at her surprised face. I was too shocked to move. Then Marge Ann's mother appeared beside her, gaping.

"Why, Horace, whatever are you doing! This is—this is outrageous, scandalous!"

Marge Ann cried:

"Oh, I've never been so embarrassed in all my life! Horace, I'll *never* speak to you again!"

Little by little I picked myself up from the floor. The other Horace had vanished—just the way I had meant he should—and all eyes were turned on me. In my track shorts! The crowd gathered about me.

I stood swaying dizzily for a moment, then I muttered aloud:

"Ha-ha, I thought I'd do a little running. Nothing like keeping in condition, you know!"

Then turning my back on their goofy stares I tottered off weakly.

That ended that. I went home and tried to forget it all. But you can't forget such things so easy and what keeps me awake at night is the fact that I'd transmitted my duplicate to—Mars! At least, I set the Atom Transmitter that way—or did I? I'm not altogether sure. But when the other Horace disappeared, the Transmitter had yanked itself out of my hands and disappeared too! Now I keep wondering if my duplicate will make use of the Transmitter to come back to Earth and *really* heckle the heck out of me!

(Concluded from page 6)

ON June 21, your editor attended a wedding. One of your favorite authors got himself into a situation that wasn't fiction—it turned out to be true love, and there he was! Lucky man was the ever popular and increasingly famous David Wright O'Brien, whom many of you will remember as the nephew of the late Farnsworth Wright, who was godfather to a great many fantasy authors in his brilliant career as an editor.

The bride, Miss Eileen O'Conner, who looked very lovely indeed, told us after the ceremony that important changes were due in the life of a certain young writer. Such as no more writing after midnight; increased production due to "settling-of-the-foundation"; and better stories (we added this last ourselves) under the influence of inspiration of the most inspiring kind!

INCIDENTLY, William P. McGivern was best man, and considering your editor's 25% Irish make-up, it was a wedding-o-the-green indeed! Said Bill: "Now I can write that superstory, while Dave is on his honeymoon. Without his plot help for a couple of weeks, I'll *show* him who's best man!"

AMONG those who are now writing for us in an Army tent are Henry Gade, Edwin Benson, and Richard O. Lewis. Among those who make better writers than soldiers are newly-married David Wright O'Brien, Jack West (who got a six month deferment) and A. R. Steber.

H. W. McCauley hasn't yet persuaded the Army to reject him, and we are plenty worried. Just when so many good covers were coming our way!

JOHN BROOME, author of "Land of Wooden Men," returns in this issue, and this time we present his picture and a bit about him in the Introducing the Author department. You'll find it on page 141 and his story on page 114.

ALREADY entries are pouring in on our August contest story. And we are surprised at the number of people who know how to tell their right hand from their left. We are also surprised at the number of people who shouldn't be trusted with the hot and cold faucets of our kitchen sink!

Your editor is pleased indeed with the response to this contest, which has obviously hit the spot with you readers.

But what was that we said sometime ago about running contests? Wasn't it something about "we'd never do it again" because as judges we'd go nuts? Now we hate the sight of our right hand!

But shucks, if you like contests *that* well! . . .

IN our July issue we invited our readers on vacation to stop in on us. It was certainly worthwhile! Our first visitor, in response to that editorial invitation, was Miss Dorice DeVoe, who

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is very lovely, and who is an exotic dancer by profession, and who reads *Fantastic Adventures* and our companion magazine, *Amazing Stories* the minute they hit the stands. We certainly seem to be popular with dancers, eh?

And incidently, that invitation to visit us is now extended to the whole year, vacation or not. We're getting a new slant on who reads us, and a very pleasant one, too!

THE closest thing we have to perpetual motion is an amazing clock invented by an English scientist. The clock is powered by radium, and it is estimated, will run for thirty thousand years without attention. It operates on a simple principle.

A quartz rod is placed in a glass container. To this rod is attached a tube containing radium. An electroscope, consisting of two narrow strips of silver, is attached to the lower end. The radium sends electric charges into these strips of silver, which separate until they touch the sides of the glass container. This discharges the strips, causing them to fall back together again. This action is repeated unfailingly every two minutes.

With accuracy and durability such as this, pity the poor futurians who will never be able to use our handy alibi of the stopped or slow clock.

IN the various scientific investigations made as to the puzzle of Man's longevity, or lack of same, it is gradually being established that certain definite factors are responsible for a long and merry life.

One of the interesting conclusions reached in the search for reasons for old age, is that people who live to see ninety are almost always born of parents whose life spans were from twelve to sixteen years longer than parents of people dying below the age of ninety. This, of course, has led to added research to see just how dominantly heredity figures in the long life of an individual. Undoubtedly it has been established that it is a potent factor.

Another general conclusion reached through research is that there are strong doubts as to anyone ever having died from old age. The explanation of this is that scientists believe old age itself is only incidental to the death of an oldster, in that the old age leaves a person more susceptible to various forms of disease and injury resulting in death. The longer a person lives, for example, the greater length of time he is exposed to germs and death dealing accidents. According to this theory, no one dies. All of us, at some time or another, are killed!

Scientists do admit—naturally enough—that the problem of aging tissue and other physical attributes of senility are hard to get around. But not so long ago a test was made on an old and practically helplessly senile dog. The animal was given transfusion of "new" blood—after most of its own "old" blood was drained from its body. This resulted in the astonishing spectacle of the old dog barking, frisking, and doing things it hadn't been able to do in several years. Its coat even renewed its thickness and luster.

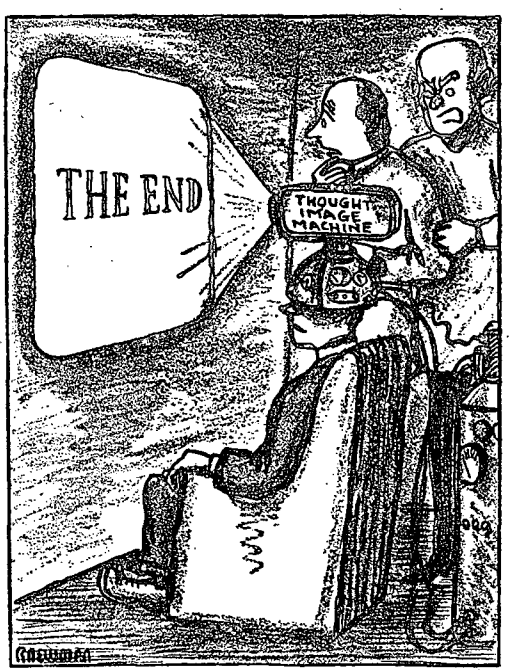
The gentleman who made this test was Doctor Alexis Carrel, whose fame at keeping a chicken heart alive for more than twenty-five years through a similar process is widely known. Doctor Carrel admits that new fresh blood is not enough to defeat old age, and that certain tissue refurnishers must be found before there'll be any speculation as to the chances of lengthening the life span of you, and you, and you.

But the search for a scientific fountain of youth will go on. And who knows but what you'll be reading this magazine 300 years from now?

J. ALLEN ST. JOHN is now painting a cover for *Fantastic Adventures* which is *not* one of the Burroughs yarns. In fact, it is being done on the strength of a sketch he brought in, and there is, as yet, no story in our files with which to run this cover. So once more we are going to put the cart before the horse and let the artist inspire the writer.

But confidentially, the writer who isn't inspired to a masterpiece by that painting just hasn't any imagination!

ALL of which brings us to the end of another series of jottings in the editorial notebook. We'll be back again next month with a lot more of the same, and thanks much for your comments on what we have to say each month. We like to talk, but like more to be listened to! *Rap.*



"Oh, shucks! He died!"

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THE PULSATING PLANET

by JOHN BROOME

There was a concentration of enemy ships on this barren world—and no place to hide them. Yet when Mulloy brought the Space Guard, they had vanished.

"THE dungeons," Colonel Ivy Hopkins said with fastidious savagery, "would be too good for that rascal Mulloy! But I'm damned if he doesn't draw sixteen months on Lune II for this trick! I've never trusted that prankster of a newsman—but this time he's gone too far! You're certain that this asteroid is dead, Daly?"

"Yes, sir," the phlegmatic engineer replied. "We went over every inch of it with young Mulloy, sir—he's outside now under custody. Any metallic mass over a ton on the surface or under it would have shown on the ferrometer. Brulgem's completely empty, sir."

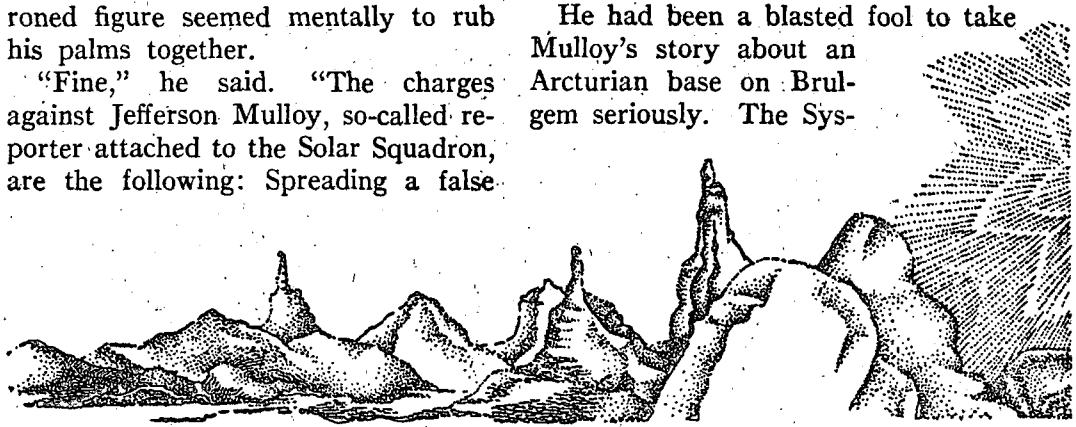
Hopkins nodded. The spare, chevroned figure seemed mentally to rub his palms together.

"Fine," he said. "The charges against Jefferson Mulloy, so-called reporter attached to the Solar Squadron, are the following: Spreading a false rumor about enemy encampments; drawing my ships a thousand parsecs out of position on a wild-goose chase; and, wasting the Council's fuel and my time! Sixteen months! If he's a model prisoner, he may get out in one year. Bring him in, Daly. I want to put him in irons personally!"

The engineer exited and Hopkins turned to the round port at the back of his office. The flagship, largest of the four war-rockets that comprised the Outer Squadron, rested on Brulgem's sandy soil; and out of his office port, Hopkins could view a desolate expanse, treeless, flat and smooth as a brown marble.

"Hmmph!" the commander snorted. "Enemy camps indeed!"

He had been a blasted fool to take Mulloy's story about an Arcturian base on Brulgem seriously. The Sys-



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It was very bewildering; first she was huge, then it was he who grew, in that uncanny pulsation

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tem and Arcturus were nominally at war but no attempt at invasion had taken place for the last seventy-five years. The last one had ended very disastrously, Hopkins knew, for the Arcturians. During the armed peace that ensued the Earth Council had never relaxed vigilance—which accounted for the presence of the Outer Squadron, one of several flotillas that patrolled the System.

HOPKINS disliked the eventless war; but even more he disliked reporters. Newsmen were a breed the braided martinet condemned as a vestigial parasite on the organism of society.

"Swamp bugs," he described them, "buzzing around men who have a job to perform." The flaming red head of Mulloy had irritated him even before he ever spoke to the ebullient reporter. It would, the Commander thought dryly, serve very nicely to decorate the rock-piles of Lune II for a year or so.

He turned as the door opened and Daly reentered, his face flushed.

"Mulloy, sir—" the engineer stammered. "He's gone!"

"Gone!" Hopkins exploded. "Where?"

"I left him in the Press amphibian he uses—with a guard, of course. But he slipped away without being seen and took the guard with him. And Colonel Hopkins—" Daly extended a folded piece of paper hesitantly—"I found this stuck to the lock of our ship by a wad of chicle, sir."

Hopkins took the slip in arctic silence.

"*Dear Bluenose,*" he read, "*Sorry I couldn't accompany you back to Earth. A pressing engagement.. I'm sure you understand. My regards to Mrs. Hopkins and all the little Hopkinses. Yours till death—preferably yours.* J. T. Mulloy. *P.S. There is an Arcturian base here, and I'm going to find it!*"

"Incorrigible!" Hopkins breathed. "I'll have him flayed by rockets, parboiled and skinned alive!"

"Shall I order pursuit, sir?"

"No!" Hopkins gulped down his rage. "I've got a better notion. There's no food or shelter on this asteroid. We'll let him cool his heels here for a day or more. When he tries to get off we'll intercept him. Jefferson Mulloy will come back to Earth, Daly, with an escort that *won't* be a guard of honor!"

THE light steel cruiser skimmed blithely along the monotonous sandy surface of Brulgem. Inside the tiny amphibian, a large red-headed young man held the wheel with one hand, while with the other he kept a pocket derringer dug into the ribs of his companion—a small terrier of a man, half-bald, miserable and dressed in Patrol blue.

"Ike," Jeff Mulloy was saying, "I want to be friends. I've got a lot of friends, despite what Ivy Hopkins may say. Old Bluenose doesn't like me because it's my business to point out any official stupidities I see. And I see plenty."

"Listen," groaned Corporal Henrik "Ike" Ikkerson, "you got to take me back, Mulloy. Why, the Old Man may have me court-martialed! I'll be shot for desertion!"

"Nonsense, you're not deserting, Ike. I'm kidnaping you. Besides, it's too late. Look."

The terrain under the cruiser trembled as a great shark-like body shot upward from Brulgem. The grey shape was followed by three more, hurtling zenithward and disappearing into the blackness above the planetoid.

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"The squadron!" the little man in Patrol serge moaned. "They're leaving me behind. Now I'm in for it!"

Mulloy pocketed the gun and leaned back.

"Listen, Ike," he said earnestly. "You and I have known each other for a long time, haven't we? Am I the kind of guy to peddle pipe-dreams? I tell you there's an Arcturian base somewhere on this big chunk of silicate. I saw it a week ago when I landed for minor repairs. It wasn't two hundred yards from me. But it was night and I got away without being seen. Now, Scotch has worked wonders with me—but it's never yet materialized an entire enemy camp—batteries, destroyers and all!"

"You mean that yarn you spilled to the Commander was a true one?" Ikkerson blinked incredulously.

"Either that," the redhead said solemnly, "or the solid Mulloy strain has finally cracked."

"But Sergeant Daly couldn't find any base," Ikkerson protested. "Where is it?"

"That," Jefferson Thomas Mulloy replied with unaccustomed seriousness, "is exactly what I'm going to find out before I leave Brulgem. Are you with me, Ike?"

"Yep!" the little corporal returned with a grin. "Blast it, I am! I believe you, Jeff—and besides I always had a yen to go AWOL. Let's go!"

THE two settled back in the cruiser and skimmed along on the spiral course Mulloy had charted to cover Brulgem. But after an hour, the newsman frowned troubledly. It wasn't that he couldn't locate the base—that might take time. But he couldn't even discern an area remotely resembling the one in which the Arcturian camp had lain! Where before there had been dark mountain ridges and shadowed valleys, there was now nothing but a flat expanse of sand—dry rubbery silicate that stretched around Brulgem like a tightly-drawn carpet. He was beginning to think that the encampment was a figment of his brain—when Ikkerson suddenly sat upright.

"What's that?" the corporal was squinting through the forward windport. Mulloy followed his gaze and saw a box-like structure upraised on the sand dead ahead. Its surface gleamed like a transparent mineral. It was roughly twenty feet square.

"I don't know what it is," the redhead muttered halting the amphibian, "but I'll bet two pistons out of my crankcase it wasn't here earlier today! Come on, we're going to investigate."

The two donned their shoulder-fitting bulgers* and emerged onto the spongy brownish ground a few yards from the glass square. Mulloy saw as they advanced that the strange structure was occupied.

Sight of its occupant brought both Earthmen to a halt. The creature was hardly four feet high, a dwarfed misshapen figure with a great unwieldly head, dressed in an outlandish purple uniform covered with braid. He was sighting through an instrument on a tripod that looked like a giant sextant; and as he gazed, the dwarf exuded a kind of hateful, venomous evil that sent

*A bulger is a rubberoid space helmet, which is provided with an oxygen tank that inflates it and provides the occupant with breathing facilities while on a planet that has no atmosphere, or while in empty space between planets. It gets its name from two sources: from the ludicrous way in which it bulges when the oxygen is turned on, and from the name of its inventor, Arnold Bulger, who devised the first rubberoid space suit and proved its practicability, and its superiority over metal suits, by leaping into space from a liner's port, and the means of a portable radio, contacted another ship two Earth day's later, just as his oxygen was running out, none the worse for wear. —Ed.

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a shiver even through the big frame of the redheaded newsman.

"Cute little gent, eh?" Ike shuddered at his side.

The dwarf seemed impervious to their presence, not even turning when Mulloy rapped his fist on the glass to attract his attention. Nor did the shouts that followed attract the figure's attention. He was either deaf or they couldn't make contact through the surface of the glass-like mineral. Mulloy circled the structure without discovering a means of entrance.

"Come on, Ike," he frowned, "use your pistol-butt on this wall. I want to talk to the general."

There was something about the dwarf aside from his gargoyle-like appearance that puzzled Mulloy. He was no arcturian—having neither the Viking build, white hair nor featureless face of Earth's traditional enemies. What was he? Mulloy watched uncertainly as Ikkerson raised his heavy regulation gun for a second blow—and then it happened.

Jeff Mulloy felt himself falling—falling rapidly and helplessly downward. For a few seconds all went black and misty before his eyes. The abyss into which he was descending seemed bottomless, without end. Then, with a cushioned feathery shock he struck solid ground.

WHEN Jeff Mulloy picked himself dazedly to his feet, several things clamored for his benumbed attention. First, Ikkerson, the cruiser, the dwarf in the glass house—all were gone. He was on uneven ground in the midst of a shadowy hill-rimmed valley that seemed oddly familiar—though strikingly different from the smooth terrain of a moment ago. And, second, there were scuffling sounds and cries of struggle near him. He wheeled about—in time to catch in his arms a trembling feminine form. On his chest a black tousled head panted with fright.

"Well," Mulloy muttered in astonishment as he tried gently to disengage the girl's arms in order to get a look at her. "I didn't know I was expected!"

It was with some difficulty that he finally unclasped the girl's arms and stepped back. But the difficulty didn't come because the girl resisted. Mulloy experienced the peculiar sensation that there was an actual physical attraction, some magnetism of flesh, pulling them together so that his hands clung to her shoulders. It was with some effort that he kept his distance.

The girl recovered herself quickly after glancing about. She looked up at Mulloy with an expression of surprise that gave way oddly to anxiety and then to a downright coldness.

"Tha-ank you," she said. The words were strange and formal as if book-learned and never previously used.

"For what?" Mulloy smiled. "Thank *you!*"

The girl blushed haughtily and stepped further back. Mulloy felt the queer magnetism between them slacken.

"You sa-aved my li-ife." The girl gestured off to her right and for the first time Mulloy saw that several figures, vague in the shadows of the valley, were scampering away in the distance. "Your sud-den appeara-ance," the girl spoke more quickly, "frightened Vagar and his cowards away." A flash of bitter contempt made her soft voice quiver. Jeff Mulloy blinked uncertainly.

"Then I'm glad I happened along," he smiled. "Though I must admit it was an accident."

The girl did not answer his smile; her vermilion blue eyes were measuring him almost suspiciously.

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"Listen," Mulloy protested, "I may be a stranger, but I'm a friend. Earth, you know—like you. You are Earth, aren't you?"

The girl said nothing. Mulloy saw an odd mixture of emotions flit over her face, hostility softened by a kind of feminine weakness and pity. At last she gestured for him to follow her and started off in the direction opposite to that her attackers had taken. Was she guiding him to safety? To her people, perhaps? With a puzzled shrug, the newsman strode after her.

HE noticed now that she wore no bulger, and cautiously tried removing his own headpiece. Sure enough, there was air! A thin but adequate mixture. This was getting more and more confusing. Was he still on Brulgem? He could be nowhere else, despite the startling transformation. For the moment, the redhead stopped trying to analyze the metamorphosis that had occurred and concentrated on the girl, as they walked upward from the valley.

She was, Earth or not, a beauty by most System standards; her oval face and flawless ivory complexion provided a perfect setting for the deep blue eyes that lay under long lashes. One thing was certain, Mulloy thought as he watched her out of a corner of his eye: she was no Arcturian. Once or twice he had seen press shots of the lumbering, yellow-haired oxen who were the fraus of that distant race. They compared to this girl as a plow horse to a racing filly.

"Here," the girl said suddenly, and led him through a narrow, half-hidden ravine in the hill. They emerged on a rocky ledge that overlooked another valley. But in the center of the curving natural cupola below them, the newsman descried a cluster of dwellings, flat and square, surrounded by a huge wall; and further off under the lee of the opposite hill lay *the ominous muzzles of great land batteries and the sleek, grey shapes of space-destroyers!*

Jeff Mulloy barely repressed a cry of amazement. This was it! This was the encampment he had stumbled on when he landed for repairs! Every detail was as he remembered it: the great stone barracks near the guns, the slate-colored adobe houses surrounding the camp square; and the huge figures of the Arcturians walking to and fro, carrying building materials and instruments of steel!

"Wait," his sudden command halted the girl. "We'll say goodby here if you're going into that camp."

The girl turned, her small brow creased impatiently.

"Come," she said. "My father will not let the White-hairs harm you. You have saved my life."

Mulloy grimaced. Somehow he trusted this girl's straightforward gaze; but her judgment was another matter. He would be an idiot to walk into an open trap, yet death was inevitable if he remained out in this bleak stony wilderness without food or water. He would have to trust the girl for the present at least.

UPBRAIDING himself for a fool, the redhead followed the lithe, tunic-clad form that was picking its way daintily but surely down the steep slope. They approached a heavy, grilled barrier that divided the massive wall and was flanked by two huge, stone guard-houses on either side. Mulloy stuck his hand into his pocket and fingered his tiny derringer without drawing much comfort from it.

Suddenly the door of one of the guard-houses opened and a towering figure bounded forth, a uniformed figure with white locks and a huge face

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that was a blank wall of flesh. An Arcturian warrior! But before Mulloy could even extract his puny weapon, the girl at his side uttered a sharp command in a strange tongue. The giant stopped abruptly and the girl addressed a few more words to it. It rumbled something like "Eelen" or "Elin" and disappeared back into the stone turret.

"Thanks," Jeff Mulloy muttered wiping his brow. "Now we're even, Elin. Is that your name."

"Yes," the girl said. "I am Elin."

"And I," the redhead grinned, "am Mulloy. The pleasure's mine."

The girl did not rise to his flippant note.

"Come," she said anxiously. "Stay close beside me and walk fast when we are inside."

The odd magnetism made it easy for them to stay close, Mulloy found as they passed through the gate; her shoulder sort of clung to the middle of his forearm as they walked. Now that they were in the camp, Mulloy saw that he was an object of great attention. The big Arcturians halted their activity as he passed and gaped as if they had never seen a man of Earth before. Which, Mulloy reflected, was very possibly true considering the last encounter.

He recognized the System's traditional enemies from private viewings he had seen of old newsreels.

The Arcturians were big as ever, averaging about nine feet high. Their pallid, pigmentless faces were without features except for two small openings in the center which served not only as eyes, but as ears and a voice aperture as well.

It was foolhardy to underrate the lumbering giants, however, as earlier System commanders had discovered to their misfortune. The Arties were inhumanly clever with tools and had a cunning in warfare that was all their own. Their fingers were a clue—ten to each hand, and all without joints, merely supple cartilage, strong and pliable as copper wire. With them, the White-hairs could splice a manifold switchboard in ten minutes or demolish a steel building in less.

THE girl walked more quickly as she approached a large adobe dwelling that fronted on the foliage- and shrub-covered square in the midst of the camp. Mulloy glancing back saw that a crowd of the Arties were following them now, muttering low suspicious sounds in their squeaky, high-pitched voices. Obviously, only the presence of the girl restrained them. The newsman glanced back at Elin. Who was this girl? And how did she come to be in an Arcturian camp?

He had no time to ask questions, however, as Elin guided him quickly into the large building and shut the door behind him. Outside, Mulloy heard the ominous sounds of the increasing crowd rumble louder.

"Wait," Elin said. "I will inform my father. Do not fear. He will not let the White-hairs harm you."

Mulloy sank uneasily into one of the metal chairs in the anteroom. So Elin's father was a big shot here! It was a comforting thought. Jeff Mulloy had found that in tight spots an influential friend was more useful than Aladdin's lamp. In a moment, the girl returned.

"My father," she said, "greets you and asks you to accompany this guard." She indicated the Arcturian who had reappeared with her. "He says that it will be best for him to take you into protective custody for awhile. And he intends to speak to you soon. Please do as he says!"

Mulloy frowned and nodded.

Protective custody; the phrase had a

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dark brown unpleasant taste. The redhead was led down a narrow flight of spiral stone steps that opened from the anteroom, and ushered into a great bare room somewhere in the underground caverns beneath the adobe house. Hearing the lock click behind him as the door closed did not make Mulloy feel any better. He was a prisoner. He had been a fool to trust the girl, the redhead told himself. It would have been better to take his chances out in the wilderness.

"Hya!" a familiar voice came from one corner and a small figure advanced holding one hand to his head. In the drab rays that seeped in from a single tiny window high in one wall, Mulloy recognized Corporal Ikkerson.

"Ike! Well, I'll be—! I thought I left you behind—or above!"

As the little corporal came close, the newsman saw he was nursing a lump on his head the size of a tank bearing and almost as black.

"Nope," Ikkerson grinned wanly. "Right after you disappeared, I took the dive too. I guess we both sort of vanished, eh?"

"Yeh! But up to now I wasn't sure whether it was all a hashdream or not! Now I know this camp is real, and Elin, too."

"Elin?"

Mulloy quickly detailed his encounter with the girl and her escape from someone named Vagar. Ikkerson started at the last name, and took a folded piece of parchment from his breast pocket.

"Take a look at this," he said. "I found it on the floor near the door when I came to."

THE writing on the paper was printed in stilted, formal fashion: DO NOT DESPAIR. BE PATIENT AND ABOVE ALL GIVE NO INFORMATION TO KHALEMAN. WE SHALL ENDEAVOR TO EXPLAIN LATER WHEN YOUR RESCUE CAN BE EFFECTED. UNTIL THEN REMEMBER, DO NOT TRUST KHALEMAN. And it was signed, VAGAR.

"Vagar!" Mulloy's rust eyebrows arched. "Well, that makes everything on this screwy world as clear as grease-goo, doesn't it! Who is this Vagar and why in the seven galactic universes should he warn us against a chap named Khaleman?"

Ikkerson took out a battered pipe and pulled on it thoughtfully.

"I think I have a few clues," he said. "The Arties who picked me up after I grounded near the camp jabbered a lot while they brought me in. I was too dazed to try to run for it at first, and when I did I got this." He fingered the discolored onion protruding from his skull. "But before that some of the things they said came through. Arcturian was basic training in the Squadron, you know, and it's pretty simple when you get the hang of it.

"What I got was this: This Brulgem we're on is a rogue, you know, coming into the System and then leaving it for parts unknown. Well, the Arcturian base here is big enough to make this asteroid a travelling arsenal! They expect to use it as a springboard to seize key System bases when they get close enough."

"I figured as much," Mulloy nodded. "But it sounds like suicide on a large scale. How in hell do they expect to get through our outer defenses without being spotted. And who's their leader? Is it Khaleman?"

"I don't know who the leader is," Ikkerson shook his head worriedly. "But about being spotted — when Colonel Hopkins was here, the Squadron saw nothing. You and I drove around for

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hours and we didn't see a thing until we fell, or whatever it was that happened to us. There's a lot on Brulgem we don't understand yet, Jeff."

"Yeh," the redhead agreed, throwing himself on the single cot that graced the bare cell and lighting a cigarette from a crumpled pack, "a lot, Ike, not excluding a pair of blue eyes that do strange things when you look at them." He paused and added more seriously. "However I've got a feeling, a hunch that we're gonna learn more soon when we hear from this bird, Khaleman!"

THE redheaded newshawk's premonition was borne out even sooner than he expected but in a slightly different fashion. The figure that bent over him, shaking him awake on the cot a few hours later, was no man's, but Elin's! Mulloy sat up with a start. Ike was snoring peacefully on the floor a few yards away.

"Shhh," the girl whispered anxiously. "Please make no noise and listen to me. I have come to you because I feel I can trust you—and there is no one else I can trust!"

"Go on," Mulloy said in a low voice.

"Khaleman—my father has set a trap for Vagar. Vagar is an outlaw here. When his uprising begins, father has arranged that Vagar and all his followers will be shot down like dogs! It will be frightful! You must help me stop it."

"I? What can I do?"

"I can help you out of here. You must find Vagar in the hills and warn him."

Mulloy stood up and stared at the girl in wonderment.

"Wait a minute. I thought you hated this Vagar. Wasn't he the one that tried to kill you or kidnap you?"

"Yes," the girl said. "But, please, do not ask me to explain now." There was a look in her wide blue gaze that only one emotion can place there. Mulloy felt a strange twinge run through him.

"Oh!" the redhead grunted. "I see, Ambivalence. Hate and love coexistent. And I'm to play Cupid?"

"Please don't misunderstand," the girl pleaded.

"I don't."

"Then, will you do—?"

Elin stopped. A perceptible shiver ran the length of her shapely form and her eyes darted in apprehension to the door which was opening. Mulloy followed her eyes—

A misshapen glaring figure stood in the doorway surrounded by Arcturian guards. An ugly macrocephalic brow overhung two black coruscating eyes; and the twisted, malformed shape was adorned by a cream colored uniform. But despite the changed attire, the newshawk had no difficulty in recognizing the "little general" of the glass house! "Khaleman!" the redhead whispered to himself. "Sure as I'm two feet high!"

The dwarf stood there swaying slightly because of his unbalanced body, huge on top and tapering to the slender feet. His steady unblinking stare was baleful, unnerving. Elin seemed to shrink under the piercing gaze.

"Father," she began brokenly. "I—"

The dwarf cut her short with a harsh imperative command and Elin went, head bowed, from the cell. Thereupon, the macrocephalic issued several other guttural orders to his subordinates and, drawing a floor-length black cape around his huge shoulders, disappeared abruptly after the girl. Two of the Arcturians came forward and gripped Mulloy by the arms, almost carrying the big newsman toward the door.

"See you later, Ike," the redhead

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tossed back over his shoulder, "I hope."

JEFF MULLOY, thrust without ceremony into a stately, lavishly furnished room several levels above his cell, looked about him curiously. The rich, thick wall tapestries; the intricately-worked Venusian carpet underfoot; the metallic Virga-wood desk with its delicate intaglios behind which Khaleman sat—all bespoke a rich, almost decadent culture; certainly not the mechanical culture of Arcturus. It was more like the room of an intellectual Earthman. Mulloy glanced at the dwarf behind the impressive desk with unslackened interest. Where had he seen this man before?

At a sign from Khaleman, the huge White-hairs released their grip on him and stepped to the rear. Mulloy approached the desk and stared down into the black, intense gaze of the dwarf.

"You will excuse my daughter," Khaleman began suavely, almost casually. "Elin has become distraught during our — ah — our journey and sometimes her words reflect only her rather overactive imagination."

Mulloy watched the gaudily-dressed dwarf in silence as Khaleman emphasized his words with small flourishes of his tiny, well-kept hands. Was this an overture of friendship? The dwarf's initial cordiality almost took the redhead off his guard.

"I will be frank with you, Mis-ter Mulloy," Khaleman continued unctuously. "The penalty for spying on Brulgem is consignment to the Crystal Cube. However, in consideration of the part you played in saving my daughter's life from the renegade Vagar—I will commute your sentence."

"In return for what?" Mulloy asked bluntly.

The dwarf's lips curved into a knowing smile as he regarded the redhead.

"I believe you can be of assistance to me, Mr. Mulloy. I will explain briefly. There is a section of this camp which has foolish notions of invading your System. I have not been able to dissuade them. But by a detailed account of the strength of Earth bases, which you can supply, I will be able to convince Vagar and his followers of the futility of the contemplated invasion. Will you cooperate?"

Mulloy laughed shortly.

"You're knocking on the wrong door, Khaleman," he said. "I don't know System bases—but even if I did I don't think I'd let you have them."

"Please," the dwarf was not taken aback by the blunt words, "let us understand each other. Besides being of service to your people and mine, you will—er—avoid the Crystal Cube by cooperating. Is that clear?"

THE two stared into each other's eyes but Mulloy remained silent. At the back of the redhead's mind, the problem of where he had seen Khaleman before had been working. Now it suddenly came to him, and he snapped his fingers with a wry grin.

"Got it!" Mulloy ejaculated. "Khaleman, eh? Weren't you once called Kha LeMin—a French-Russian who tried to overthrow the Council awhile back and substitute a puppet dictator of his own!"

The dwarf's huge face did not change expression in the slightest but Mulloy detected a faint narrowing of the luminous black orbs, as if their owner were afraid they might give away his secret.

"You are mistaken," Khaleman said in a quiet voice. "I am not of Earth, Mr. Mulloy."

"No?" The redhead bent forward over the desk. "Listen, Khaleman, I'm a newspaperman. It's my business to remember things like this. You were

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last seen in the System exactly twenty-two years ago. There was a report of your death, but it remained unconfirmed. You became known because of your activities as The Man Who Hated Earth. The Patrol would like to know that you went to Arcturus!"

The dwarf sat motionless for an instant but by perceptible degrees his pallid complexion turned a livid green. The mask was off!

"They will know," the croaked voice was almost unrecognizable. "All Earth will know—when it is too late! But as for you, Mis-ter Mulloy—" Khaleman was on his feet swaying almost drunkenly—"as for you, it is my belief that already you know far too much!"

"Mebbe," Mulloy glanced behind him quickly. "But the Arcturians might be interested also!" He wheeled and faced the two White-hairs at the back of the room. "Listen, you two! Tell your people that this man is only using your race as pawns to carry out a private vengeance on the System. Do you hear?"

The Arties remained stolid and impassive as wood posts.

"Fool!" Khaleman grated with withering contempt. "Do you think they'd believe you—even if they understood your language? Besides, what you said is a lie! I have completely identified myself with Arcturian culture. It is superior in every way to the stupid democracy of the System and it will in time rule this Galaxy!"

Mulloy listened grimly.

"Then your talk about Vagar was just a ruse, as I suspected! You, Kha LeMin the Earth-hater, are the one who is leading the Arcturians into this venture. And Vagar must be one of those who oppose your plans—which is why he's an outlaw. Well, that makes sense at last!"

"Yes," the dwarf said softly with a fanged unmirthful grin. "Doesn't it, Mr. Mulloy. But now that you know the truth, what do you propose to do? That is—in the short time during which the Crystal Cube is made ready for your —ah—occupancy?"

MULLOY said nothing and faced the leering dwarf impassively. Out of the corner of his eye, the redhead was watching the Arties at the rear and calculating his chances. They were minute, but if he could get his derringer into Khaleman's back — his muscles flexed unnoticeably for a spring but at that moment the dwarf ripped out a series of guttural commands and the newshawk found himself covered by the blunt weapons of the White-hairs. He recognized the guns from squadron manuals; they threw a nasty chemical that killed instantly—blood-congealers, they were called. It was useless to try anything now.

"Good-by, my young friend," Khaleman said mockingly. "You will not see me again—though I will have the pleasure of watching you once more!"

The meaning of the dwarf's last crack was not clear to Mulloy till later. He was dragged downstairs again toward his cell. Whatever the Crystal Cube was, Khaleman hadn't made it sound pleasant! Before he entered it—if it came to that—the redhead decided grimly that he would take care of just as many Arties as he could. The less the better when Hopkins or another Patrol leader finally came to grips with Khaleman's battalions.

Picking himself up from the stone flagging of his cell where the guards threw him, Jeff Mulloy hardly noticed the figure before him until the Arcturian was directly in front of him.

"Hel-lo," the White-hair said slowly. Mulloy looked up to an unkempt figure whose uniform had been sadly bedrag-

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gled and torn. But the thing that startled the redhead were the *eyes*, small but well-defined, in the massive featureless face of his visitor. Also, there was something about this Arcturian, a certain air about his manner and bearing that made Mulloy grin wryly and stick out his hand.

"Hello, Vagar," he said. "So they got you, too!"

The other gripped the Earthman's hand in a manner that made Mulloy feel his paw was caught in a cement-mixer.

"No, my friend," Vagar said. "Not yet." His voice was deep, more manly than the usual shrill Arcturian intonation. Altogether, the strange White-hair presented the picture of a perfect fighting man able to use either wits or muscles when the occasion demanded. Mulloy could not help feeling a slight pang of envy as he regarded Elin's choice. The girl had good taste anyway!

"But listen," the redhead remembered suddenly. "Elin told me to warn you about Khaleman's trap."

"I know," Vagar nodded. "But that is no longer necessary. I have seen Elin, herself. There are more of our movement here in the camp than even Khaleman suspects! But I must be quick. The time is almost ripe for our uprising. Before it, you will be delivered from this cell."

"And Ike—my friend?" For the first time, Mulloy realized that the little man in Patrol blue was missing from the room. A cloud passed over Vagar's impassive countenance.

"I am sorry," the Arcturian said. "Your friend has already been taken to the Crystal Cube. It was unavoidable. Rest assured that if anything could have prevented it, we would have tried."

"BUT, man!" Mulloy cried. "I can't let Ike die! There must be something—some way to stop Khaleman!"

"Please," Vagar laid a heavy, consoling hand on the Earthman's shoulder. "I tell you it is too late to help your poor friend. You must think of yourself now, and of our movement. We want peace—an end to this senseless war between our races. True Arcturians have for long secretly desired to end hostilities. Only Khaleman's scheme prevented an armistice!"

"Just what is this scheme?"

"I don't know," Vagar shook his great head. "But in some way it is connected with the mystery of this planet to which Khaleman alone holds the key. Brulgem is no ordinary world. You have no doubt noticed the peculiar magnetism between living bodies. Yet the attraction is not always present. Regularly, at the end of a period equal to one of your moon's, there is a strange cataclysm that passes instantly, hardly noticed over this planet. It is a sort of vibration that I can hardly describe."

"Go on," Mulloy said. The redhead's brow was furrowed in troubled concentration.

"Now the magnetism is at work," Vagar said, "but with the next vibration of the terrain it will be gone. The air we breathe will be gone, too; and all of us will don our space-helmets for another moon. Aside from these, everything will appear exactly the same as before."

"You know," Mulloy asked, "that this camp is invisible and intangible to outsiders?"

"Yes. That is the principle reason why the Elders of Arcturus sanctioned this invasion. Khaleman promised them that this expeditionary force would not be discovered until too late; but he gave no hint as to how it would be done."

"The invisibility does not come from a difference in dimension," Mulloy

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frowned. "A System Squadron I brought to Brulgem covered the terrain with an interferoscope. As a matter of fact, it's not constant! When I first happened to land here, I saw this base. Yet a week later, when I came back, it was gone!"

Vagar listened without comment.

"I cannot fathom the mystery of Brulgem," he said at last. "Perhaps you will succeed, Mulloy. But time is growing perilously short. It is scarcely more than a matter of *kivis*—hours before Brulgem will be well inside the System. Once the first Earth bases are captured by surprise attack, it is arranged that the major Arcturian force will arrive quickly. Only a miracle can avert a bloody renewal of this senseless war—"

There was a slight sound that came from behind the closed door of the cell. Vagar listened intently as if it were a signal.

"I have remained here too long already," he said. "I must go. But before nightfall—if I am still alive—you will be freed. And together we will make a final attempt to stop Khaleman."

The two shook hands in a silence that cemented the rapid but firm friendship that had sprung between them; and Vagar slipped quietly out of the cell. Alone, Jeff Mulloy strode to and fro, his eyes fixed on the stone flagging underfoot sightlessly, his brain working furiously.

OF all the strange aspects of Brulgem, the periodic vibration that Vagar had spoken of struck the newshawk most forcibly. Mulloy felt that here, in this periodicity, lay Khaleman's secret. It was regular according to the Arcturian. Therefore it was logical to assume that it was due to natural causes and outside the dwarf's control. But Khaleman was the only one who knew it intimately enough to guide his actions accordingly!

The redheaded newshawk felt like a man before a disarrayed cardboard puzzle. All the pieces lay before him, yet he could not arrange them to make sense. The feeling of futile helplessness enraged him but did not bring the mystery any closer to solution. Further, the enforced confinement was telling on his nerves. He calmed himself with an effort.

By upturning his metal cot, Mulloy found that he could just reach the small square hole in the cell wall and peer into it. The aperture was the outlet of a horizontal ventilator and he discovered that he could see a section of the camp.

The queer, starless night of Brulgem shed a pale radiance on slow-moving Arties carting supplies out of the barracks into the destroyers. The ships were lit up; yellow light from their square ports falling in shafts to the shadowy ground below.

Zero hour was approaching! Well, Mulloy reflected with grim irony, he wouldn't be cooped up here much longer! It would be either Vagar or the Crystal Cube. One way or the other he'd be out damned soon!

IT was not Vagar who came.

Jeff Mulloy's jaw settled hard as he watched the picked corps of uniformed Arties troop into his cell. Khaleman's minions surrounded the redhead, two before and two in back, execution style, and marched him up into the street level. With red-rimmed, sleepless eyes, Mulloy took in the misty, milkish dawn that had come to Brulgem. Vagar had not come—which meant the worst. Only death would have stopped the deep-voiced Artie from keeping his word.

The squad marched him toward the

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foliage-rimmed public square in the center of the camp. Once inside, Mulloy saw that the entire population of Brulgem, soldiers as well as civilians and women, were assembled in the square on hastily-constructed tiers of benches. So his death was going to be a sort of a big-top show, Mulloy thought with wry contempt. Well, the big flat-faced apes would be disappointed if they expected to see him dance to Khaleman's tune and beg for mercy!

The squad led him without halting toward the middle of the square and Mulloy's gaze narrowed puzzledly as he saw the structure that lay there. It was about twenty feet high and roughly a square. He couldn't be sure about the shape because the strange erection was completely covered by a muffling shroudlike cloth. It looked like a gigantic bird-cage with the hood thrown over it. Above it was a pulley attached to the hood, apparently designed to pull it off at the proper time.

Mulloy had no time to examine the Crystal Cube further. Before he could move, three pairs of ham-like Arcturian hands pinned his arms helplessly to his sides; while the fourth guard found an opening in the hood and pulled it aside a trifle, revealing a narrow, dark aperture. Without further ceremony, the newshawk was thrust into the opening—just as out of a corner of his eye he saw the hood going up. The aperture closed behind him.

He stood motionless in semi-darkness that gave way at once to drab grey light as the hood outside came off. He stood with his back to the closed aperture; sunlight seeped in through walls of creamy opacity around him, and even before he knew what danger lurked in the Cube, Mulloy realized what mockery had lain behind Khaleman's last words to him. The walls must admit one way vision—so that the dwarf could see in while he could not look out!

His muscles tightened involuntarily as his body automatically girded itself for what might befall. Then, with a start of astonishment, he saw across the metallic floor of the cube—a crumpled, familiar form: Ikkerson!

"Ike!" In three great strides, Mulloy was at the other side of the strange cage. But even as he bent over the fallen shape, Ikkerson's voice came to him, weakly, as the man in Patrol blue lifted his head a trifle:

"Watch out, Jeff! *Behind you!*"

MULLOY whirled as a long fantastic shadow fell athwart him and Ikkerson. The sight that met his eyes as he turned seemed to turn the blood in the newshawk's veins into brittle ice. A great spiral shape reared upward from the floor and swayed over his head. The thing had no features; its silver grey mottled body, spiralled like a corkscrew, was thick as a man's waist. It exuded a noisome foul vapor from two holes at the front of its knobbed, shapeless head.

Even as Mulloy, hardly aware of what he was doing, dodged the creature's first awkward lunge, it came to the newshawk that the light streaming in through the translucent walls of the cube irritated the thing, just as the hood lulled—which accounted for the fact that Ikkerson was still alive.

By exercising all his agility, the newshawk avoided the next vicious attacks of the reptilian monster. His side-stepping seemed to infuriate the creature which rose again and again snake-like on its hind quarters and lunged its ponderous frame at the human. Two short fang-like protuberances in the thing's head particularly caught the Earthman's attention; and

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he knew instinctively as he dodged that the touch of the fangs meant horrible death.

It was clear to Mulloy that he could not keep up this onesided game much longer; one unlucky misstep and his number was posted. Besides, he was beginning to breathe heavily already while the spiral monster was coming at him faster than ever. In desperation, the newshawk yanked out his only weapon, a puny pen knife with a two-inch blade. The Arties hadn't even bothered to take it from him.

Mulloy, bobbing and weaving at the last instant each time to conserve every bit of energy, attempted to bring his pitiful little weapon into play against his gigantic adversary. But the knife barely penetrated the creature's shell-like hide and drew no blood. Mulloy saw with added horror the few drops of fuming white liquid that oozed from the tiny hole he had made.

His strength was waning, the Earthman felt with despair. He could no longer summon up the energy to leap aside; and with the thing's last lunge, Mulloy felt a hot wet fang touch his temple and almost but not quite penetrate the skin. He could go one or two more at the most! With set jaw, Jeff Mulloy prepared to meet his end.

"I hope they enjoyed the show—the bloodthirsty apes!" the redhead thought with a flash of bitter irony.

THEN as he moved slowly, barely escaping the fierce lunge that almost pinned him against one wall, Mulloy saw something queer on the creature's silvery frame. A small dark blotch had appeared around the hole he had made in the hide—a blue patch that seemed to be widening, staining the viscous, milky whiteness inside a mottled color.

Puzzled, the newshawk glanced quickly at the knife he was holding. Sure enough! The redhead's pounding heart beat even faster. He had stabbed the thing with the wrong end of the pen-knife—with the end which held a refillable pen.

A sudden desperate thought—a last, frantic hope came to the Earthman and simultaneously he acted, moving under the swaying, lunging thing, under its huge silvery midsection, and delivering with the last bit of strength left in him a powerful upward thrust with the reversed knife.

As he felt the hardened point drive into the pulpy mass under the hide, Mulloy ejected the entire contents of the tiny tube in the pen. Then he ducked and threw himself the length of the Cube.

The creature remained in the middle of the floor swaying as if stunned. Its reared head went from side to side, slowly at first and then faster. Looking below the head, Mulloy saw the aniline dye at work, spreading an inky blackness all through the semi-transparent insides of the reptile. The thing's pulpy viscera seemed to suck up the ink like a sponge.

In a few seconds as the newshawk watched half afraid to hope, the creature's silvery color turned a dull, fetid black. It began to thresh about the room in a terrible fury; but its movements were aimless, frantic and accompanied by great convulsive spasms. A shudder ran through Mulloy as he watched the awful death throes of the corkscrew reptile. In thirty seconds the monster lay an inert mass in the center of the Cube.

"Are you all right, Ike?" Mulloy turned anxiously to the little corporal who had just raised himself to his elbows. Ikkerson nodded, shaking his head dizzily.

"I guess so. The thing hit me and

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threw me to the floor; that's the last thing I remember until you came in, Jeff. I don't think the fangs touched me." Ike shuddered.

"No. They must have pulled the hood down too soon."

"What will they do with us now?"

Mulloy frowned grimly.

"I don't know," he began, when suddenly the aperture to the Cube opened and Khaleman's guards entered, pulling the Earthmen to their feet. The redhead threw off the aiding hands angrily and got up unassisted. The armed minions marched the two humans out of the Cube of death and into the open.

JEFF MULLOY took deep, grateful draughts of the fresh air as they emerged. It was good to be alive—even if it were only a short time longer. To his right, at one side of the square, a commotion of some sort seemed to be in progress. A group of Arties seemed to be arguing with someone there; their tentacle-like hands were gesticulating in the air. But the newshawk could not make out the cause of the little rumpus.

Something else caught his eye. The squad guarding the two Earthmen had halted, rather uncertainly, not far from the Cube; and glancing back Mulloy's gaze swept the structure which had not been hooded.

"Look!" he gripped the little corporal's arm suddenly. "The Cube! Do you recognize it, Ike?"

Ikkerson turned and a frown passed over his face.

"Well, I'll be—" the corporal ejaculated in a low tone. "It's the glass house in which we first saw Khaleman, Jeff!"

"Yes!" the newshawk said slowly as a look of incredulous wonder passed over his face. "And I think I've got it, Ike!"

"Got—what?"

"The Mystery of Brulgem!" Mulloy said in a low, animated tone. Khaleman's secret! It's crazy but it's the only thing that makes sense!"

The guard suddenly moved them on a ways, then halted again. The commotion at the side of the square was still going on, and angry, squeaky voices reached the two Earthmen.

"Some of the Arties are demanding that we be given our lives for escaping the Crystal Cube," Ikkerson told Mulloy. "But I think Khaleman or his henchmen are demanding that we be executed at once."

"Then we've got a chance! Listen, Ike," the words came tumbling out in swift whispers from the redheaded newshawk. "You remember that 'fall' we had? Well, we didn't fall at all—*we became smaller!* We became infinitesimal, Ike! This entire camp is infinitesimal—microscopic!"

Ikkerson stared uncomprehendingly.

"Yes!" Mulloy went on quickly. "It all fits in now! Why we couldn't find the base at first; why we saw it only after we fell; and why there's a periodic cataclysmic-like vibration here every thirty days! *Ike, Brulgem is a pulsating world!* Vagar's peculiar vibrations are only the outward signs of its tremendous, instantaneous contractions and expansions. That's Khaleman's secret!"

"I don't get it. How does he expect —?"

"Don't you see! Khaleman must have discovered the peculiar nature of Brulgem long ago and planned his invasion accordingly. He must have found out mathematically that Brulgem's last contraction at the perihelion of its orbit would carry it well inside the System defenses! And during that time this base would be altogether invisible! But I came along too soon—before the last contraction began—and saw it!"

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SLOW understanding lighted Ikkerson's gaze, but before they could speak further the two Earthmen found themselves in the center of a milling crowd of Arcturians, all talking at once and jabbering violently. Apparently, the question of their fate was still a matter of debate, and not too orderly a one. The Arties on their side seemed to regard it as a matter of principle that they should not die now. Like trying a man twice for the same crime, Mulloy thought.

They were being pushed together with their guards over to a side of the square where the foliage was massed thickly like a great hedge. Mulloy glanced about him swiftly.

"Listen, Ike," he gripped the other's arm, "I'm going to try to slip away. I've got an idea. Whatever happens—you lost sight of me! Right?"

Ikkerson nodded to the whispered query. And a moment later he saw the redheaded newshawk slink sideways and slip unnoticed into a clump of brush near them. The guards were too busy fending off the milling crowd to glimpse their prisoner's swift disappearance.

A moment or two later, the gesticulating Arcturians around the little corporal fell back making a path for someone's approach. Ike saw Khaleman hastening toward him surrounded by armed cohorts. The dwarf's face was livid with angry impatience. At threatening gestures of his armed followers, the unruly crowd fell back still further.

"Where is Mulloy?" Khaleman reached Ikkerson and hissed his question up into the Earthman's face. Ike shook his head with a gesture of innocence.

"I don't know. He—he disappeared."

The dwarf glowered.

"He will be found! Neither of you will escape the punishment due you. Guards, take this prisoner away."

The crowd was silent now under the domination of the fierce, grotesque little figure. They made way for the squad. Ikkerson grinned to himself: an idea had struck the little corporal of where Mulloy might be headed for. And Ike smiled because it was the last place on Brulgem where the Arties would think to look for the redhead. The guards led him rapidly away.

IKE'S private guess was a good one. When the queer sunless sky over the camp was brightest, marking Brulgem's midday—Jeff Mulloy was still crouched uncomfortably in a dark corner of the Crystal Cube, shadowed by the great hood that still hung above the gleaming structure. He lay cramped but motionless . . . waiting. For almost three hours he had lain thus and time was getting perilously short. Brulgem's perihelion must be scarcely more than a matter of minutes—

The newshawk's eyes were fastened on the grisly corpse of the reptilian monster near him. If his fantastic theory about Brulgem was true, then this Cube he was in was the only structure in the camp impervious to the rays of contraction. Khaleman had doubtless built it for that purpose, so that he could take astrogation readings even while the base was in its microscopic state. And the idea that had given Mulloy hope was that by remaining in the Cube for a sufficient time, he too would become impervious to the diminishing rays and regain his real size.

Which was why he watched the loathsome, corkscrew corpse. The dead reptile was his semaphore—his barometer, so to speak. Mulloy knew that only by means of the corpse could he be certain of the effect he awaited. And the redheaded newshawk prayed for that effect more earnestly than he ever

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asked for anything before.

His eyes, tired and sleepless, flickered and blinked. In that instant, he felt a fleeting quiver run lightning-like the length of his body. With a start he opened his eyes wide and turned to the corpse. *The grisly shape was gone!*

Mulloy jumped up from his cramped position with an exultant cry and dashed for the door pulling on his helmet as he ran. The newshawk knew that when he exited the Arcturian base would no longer lie around the Cube—and it wasn't! Around him was the familiar flat rubbery sand of Brulgem's terrain. He wheeled with only one thought—to get to the transmitter in his cruiser and send out a danger signal that would bring every System ship within ray-range hurtling to the rogue planet.

It brought Mulloy up short to find the amphibian gone. Of course! He felt like kicking himself; the cruiser was contracted still—microscopic! It lay somewhere underfoot lost in the subworld of the Arcturian encampment. In desperation, the redhead stood stock still like a man who sees his last hope dashed before his eyes.

"Well!" an oddly familiar, snarling voice came to his ears. "If it isn't Mr. Jefferson T. Mulloy!"

THE newshawk whirled on his heel and gaped. With a heart that pounded in him like a trip-hammer, Jeff Mulloy recognized behind the bronze, shoulder-tight bulger of the man who had addressed him—none other than Colonel Ivy Hopkins, Commander of the System's Outer Squadron! Around the advancing martinet were the familiar figures of his staff officers including Sergeant Daly. And behind them Mulloy could see the great, grey shapes of the Squadron war-rockets resting easily on Brulgem's sand!

"Colonel Hopkins," Mulloy began in a voice that was choked by emotion, "I've never been so glad to see anyone in—"

"Mulloy!" the Commander snapped. "I simply want to inform you that if it lies in my power you will spend the rest of your life behind bars! Not only do you perpetrate a stupid hoax on my Squadron—but for two days now you have turned it into a searching party! Where in blazes have you been!"

"That's what I want to tell you," Mulloy cried. "I've been in the Arcturian base! Their attack will begin any minute now. They—"

He stopped as Colonel Hopkin's blue eyes began to glitter eerily.

"Would you mind," the Commander began in a low voice that ended almost in a shrill shriek, "—would you mind, Mulloy, telling me where this base is!"

"Yes," the redhead said quickly. "It's there." He pointed underfoot. "Microscopic. I can't explain now. But you must believe me. The Arcturians are being led by Kha LeMin—the renegade Earthman—"

"Mulloy!" Colonel Hopkin's voice was an apoplectic gasp. "That's enough. Do you hear? I've had enough!" He gestured in speechless rage to several of his under-officers. "Take him away! Lock him up where I can't see him. I'm liable to—"

The Squadron martinet did not end his almost undignified outburst; but instead whirled and made for his flagship like a man pursued by furies. Mulloy cried out after him, struggling in the grip of the Patrol officers, but the Commander did not turn. In renewed desperation, the newshawk found himself being carried almost bodily toward the forward lock of the flagship.

"Listen!" he cried as the lock was opened and his guards prepared to throw him into the dark hold. "Listen,

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all of you! You must believe—"

Then, like magic, incredibly, swiftly and before the eyes of all—it happened. A fleeting, instantaneous quake seemed to shock the terrain of Brulgem; and the startled officers and men of the System's Outer Squadron found themselves gazing on an apparition. Under their eyes, scarcely a hundred yards away, a great land encampment had materialized around the glass house on the sand!

"There it is!" Mulloy yelled squirming away from the limp grasp of the wonder-stricken officers. "Quick, Colonel Hopkins! Blast those ships before they can get off! Don't wait until they turn the fortress guns on us!"

COLONEL HOPKINS' face was a pasty green; but he was the kind of man who could acknowledge defeat. He could also meet a new situation with astonishing speed. Mulloy's words had scarcely left the newshawk's lips, when the men of the Outer Squadron were jumping to life under the crackling whip-like commands of their Commander. With swift precision, but without haste, the men of the Patrol streamed along the gangways and runways of their ships and in twenty-five seconds every one was at his post. All were ready for the first salvo.

"Demand immediate surrender," Colonel Hopkins barked to his radioman. Mulloy, who had followed the martinet into the controlroom of the flagship, could see clearly into the Arcturian camp. The Arties were hardly yet recovered from the shock of seeing the great Squadron ships appear virtually over their heads. But some already were running toward the barracks-fortress and into the destroyers.

Mulloy saw a tiny figure in a glittering uniform run out into the great square of the camp. Khaleman! The dwarf was issuing commands to the slow-moving White-hairs. Under his desperate, venomous cries, the Arcturians hurried toward their posts. But it was too late; and the newshawk felt that the dwarf knew he was beaten.

"No answer, sir," the radioman said. Hopkins turned to the speaking-tube. "All starboard guns," he announced rapidly. "Aim over the camp. Fire when ready."

The flagship shook as a dozen bursts of green fumes from the nitrate-explosives burst a bare fifty yards behind the camp. The shots seemed to infuriate the grotesque little figure in the square. The dwarf swung his hands in a frenzy of epithets and commands to his subordinates. But at that moment Mulloy saw a group of Arties suddenly break into the square and make toward Khaleman.

The redhead's eyes widened in joy as he saw the great figure at the head of the insurgent group: Vagar! There could be no mistaking the purpose of the grim, black-eyed Artie and his followers. Like an avalanche, they swept down on the man who had almost brought their race to ruin. Khaleman and the few henchmen around him were engulfed and swept back by the fierce charge. The rest of the camp did not run to the dwarf's assistance. In the crisis, they appeared to trust more in Vagar, their own countryman.

"The Arcturians agree to surrender, sir," the radioman said a moment later.

"Hold fire," Hopkins ordered into the speaking tube. And to the radioman: "Have them dismount all guns and disarm all soldiers. Have their leaders come out; and tell them we're sending in an occupation corps."

With that, the martinet turned. There was on Colonel Hopkins' ascetic countenance what might almost be described as a grin of admiration. The

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Commander was actually about to slap Jeff Mulloy heartily on the back and congratulate him, but he stayed his upraised hand.

The redhead had slumped back in his seat. He was out cold! But there was a smile on his tired face.

Hopkins grinned again and signalled an orderly to carry the newshawk to the flagship's best cabin.

"THEN the peculiar magnetism," Vagar said thoughtfully, "was actually nothing but the Brownian phenomena of tiny particles in a fluid!"

"Yes," Jeff Mulloy said, "and the fluid was air. The minute degree of air in Brulgem's atmosphere was more than enough for us in the contracted state."

The newshawk had just finished explaining to Vagar how he had arrived at Khaleman's secret. The two and Corporal Ikkerson were closeted together in Hopkins' private office, awaiting the arrival of the Colonel and Elin. The flagship held a gala appearance, for tonight's party was a bon-voyage celebration in honor of Vagar. The black-eyed Arcturian was returning home in a few hours bearing with him peace terms wired from Earth.

"But what I still don't understand," Ike put in, "is where Khaleman found that monster that attacked us in the Crystal Cube!"

Mulloy grinned.

"That 'monster,' Ike," he said, "was nothing but a microbe! A spirochete! Probably Khaleman thought it was an ingenious and impressive way to kill off his enemies. The germ retained its original size in the Cube. The ink I accidentally used stained it and killed it, the same way you stain a bacteria on a slide. It was one of the things that put me on the right track."

The door opened and Colonel Hopkins marched into the office, escorting a lovely, blue eyed girl who was apparently none the worse for the harrowing experience she had passed through earlier that day. Elin, Jeff Mulloy decided judiciously, was even more beautiful in a tulle gown than she had been in the tunic—if that was possible. She sat next to him, and under the table around which every one was seated he held her hand.

"How was I to know," Mulloy whispered, "that Vagar was your half-brother? I thought you were in love with him!"

"I am," Elin laughed with a fond glance at the big Arcturian across the table, "—in a sisterly way! He was father's son on Arcturus. You can see a resemblance in the eyes."

Her clear brow darkened as she mentioned her father. Kha LeMin was in irons underdeck; but Elin knew that he would receive a fair trial for his great crimes from the System Court. It was only this day that the girl had learned the enormity of those crimes. It was just that Kha LeMin should pay for them.

Hopkins rose, glass in hand, and toasted the young couple.

"Well, Mulloy," the old martinet said, "I predicted that you'd go back to Earth under guard. But I'm blasted if it won't be a guard of honor!"

COMING NEXT MONTH

A Sensational New Story by William P. McGivern

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The most fantastic thing that has ever happened in the Senate Chambers of the United States. A story that will startle you!

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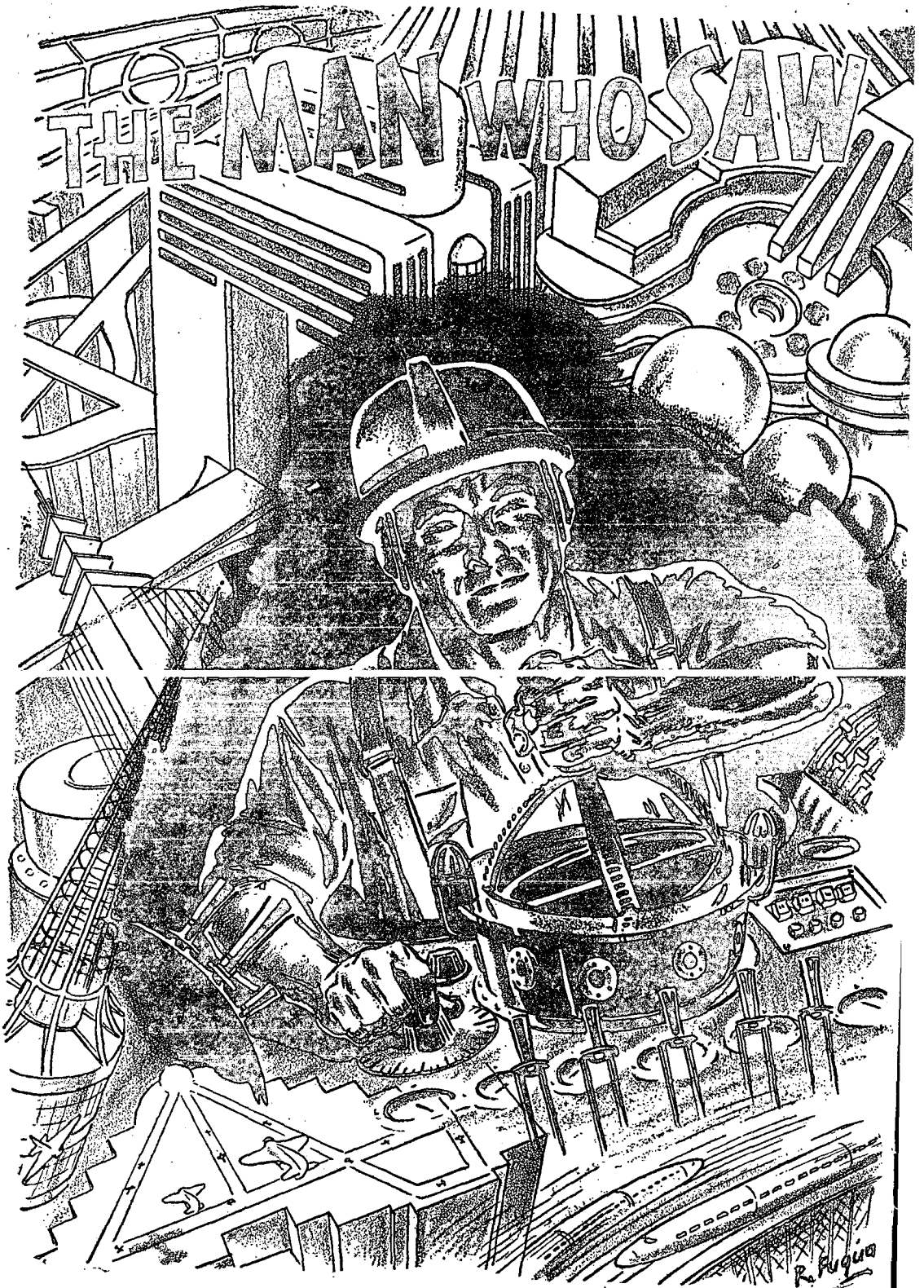

All about him Gary Fraxer saw a hodge podge of incredible scenes

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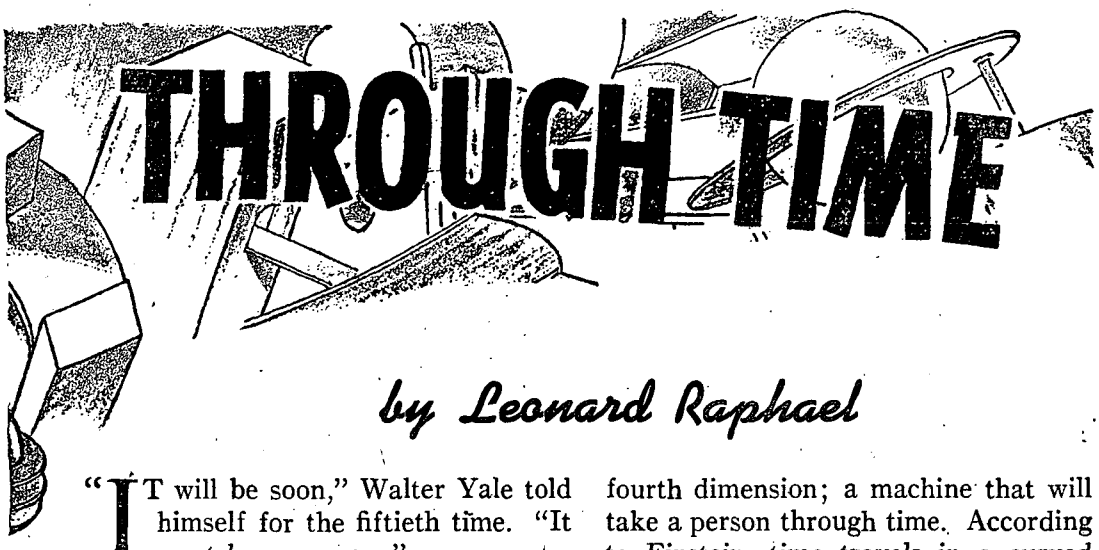

THROUGH TIME

by Leonard Raphael

"IT will be soon," Walter Yale told himself for the fiftieth time. "It must be soon now."

He was very tired. His eyelids were as swollen as Hitler's chest, and his head felt like London after an all-night bombing. But he gritted his teeth and kept staring out of the window, looking at the place where Gary Fraxer should soon appear.

For months the two had been working out on the desert, sleeping all day when the sun shone brightest and working hard all through the cool nights. They used an old shack for their laboratory.

The little wooden building was the only structure in sight on the broad expanse of desert. That was one of the reasons they had chosen this spot. They had wanted a place where no one would disturb them. So they had come out here and pretended to be doing astronomical observation. Actually, they were perfecting a time machine.

Gary Fraxer went into the future and saw something that must not happen. So he came back with a plan to prevent a future crime

It had been Fraxer's idea originally.

"You see," he had said, "all we need is a machine which can travel in the fourth dimension; a machine that will take a person through time. According to Einstein, time travels in a curved line. This machine would not only move ahead, but would take a short-cut from one point in the line, the present, to another, the future."

They had slaved over the machine until they were exhausted, but neither of them had any intention of giving up. And then, one night when they were both bleary-eyed from loss of sleep and overwork, the machine had been completed.

IT was a complicated mass of machinery which would have bewildered anyone but its creators. To them, however, each lever, each nut and bolt was familiar. They looked at it for a little while, hardly believing it was done at last.

Walter Yale put into words the thought that was in both their minds.

"Who tries it?" he questioned hoarsely.

Gary Fraxer passed a nervous hand over the heavy stubble on his chin.

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"I guess it's all mine," he said.

"Guess again. You're thinking that this experiment with time is too dangerous, and you don't want me to risk my life. No, you've done enough already. This time I'm going to take the chance."

"I should be the one," protested Fraxer. "After all, you wouldn't be much use to Carol Lewis if you were stranded somewhere in the future."

"Quit kidding. We both love Carol, and she cares for you as much as for me. She'd be just as sorry if you were lost. We can't tell who she'll finally choose for a husband, so that's no reason for your going."

"Well," said Fraxer, "you can't blame a guy for trying. What about flipping a coin?"

"You're too lucky at that. I've got a better idea."

He pointed to a cockroach crawling along a crack in the table.

"If the cockroach crawls toward you, you go. If it comes to me, I go."

"Fair enough."

The two men bent over the table, watching the insect intently. The insect paused; then, attracted by a stray crumb of bread, crawled slowly toward Fraxer.

Fraxer smiled.

"Looks like my luck holds out even in this."

The two men wheeled the machine outside, and Fraxer climbed up into the seat. He put his hand on the lever.

"Well, here I go."

He pulled back sharply. There was a sudden buzzing and whirling of wheels, and then the machine was gone.

NOW Yale was sitting on the edge of the bed, waiting. Fraxer had been gone over twelve hours. Despite his resolve to keep awake, Yale started to nod sleepily.

He was half-asleep when the door suddenly banged open. Yale started, instantly wide awake, as Gary Fraxer came walking in.

"What happened?" burst out Yale. "What did you find? Is the machine all right?"

"I found plenty. As for the machine, that's resting about a thousand years in the future. I fixed that as soon as I got back." There was a strained, half-hysterical note in Fraxer's voice.

Yale jumped up from the little cot.

"What's wrong?"

"Keep back."

A gun sprang from Fraxer's holster like a live thing. Yale looked at his partner in amazement.

"Have you gone completely out of your mind?"

At that moment Fraxer did look like a madman. His face was twisted into a mask of hate, the eyes shining like cold bits of glass, the mouth a mere slash of red.

"No, I'm not insane. But I'd be crazy to pass up an opportunity like this. You're the only man in the world who stands between Carol Lewis and myself."

"What's she got to do with this?"

"Quite a bit in an indirect way. Except for the fact that you're still alive, she'd marry me. So you're not going to go on living. I'll fix that."

Walter Yale stared unbelievingly at the man with the leveled gun. It took him a little while to realize that Gary Fraxer, the man he had trusted above all others, was going to kill him. This wasn't really happening, he tried to tell himself, it was a dream, a nightmare. But you couldn't fit that steady gun or that white, set face into a dream.

"It's that damned time machine," said Yale. "Traveling in it must have affected your mind."

At the mention of the time machine,

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the gun in Fraxer's hand wavered ever so slightly. Walter Yale's hand moved a little closer to the drawer of the table.

"Hold it," said Fraxer, and his voice was cold, hard. He reached over, opened the drawer, and laid the revolver in it on the top of the table.

"You'll be put on trial for murder," said Yale, staring at it, "and probably be convicted. Even if they don't find you guilty, Carol would never marry a man suspected of killing me."

"No one will suspect anything," said Fraxer confidently. "Two graduate students who are very close friends go out into the desert to do some research work in astronomy. One of them—you, Walter—happens to wander off and is lost forever. Too bad, but other men have died in the desert. There will be no trial. People will sympathize with me because I have lost a friend, not condemn me for killing him."

YALE racked his brains for a plan of escape. He could think of nothing. There was the revolver Fraxer had inexplicably placed on the table, but he wouldn't have a ghost of a chance to get it before the other fired. And one shot was all Fraxer ever needed to hit his mark.

"So it's going to be murder in cold blood, is it?"

"Not quite that. You'll have three counts during which you can try to get to that gun on the table. When you reach, I fire."

"That's not much more than murder!"

"I won't argue the point," said Fraxer impatiently. "We've done enough talking."

Yale whitened, but kept silent.

"One," said Fraxer.

Yale stood motionless, wanting to postpone the shooting as long as possible.

"They'll never believe you, Gary," he argued. "They'll suspect something is wrong. There's always a chance that my body will be found with a bullet hole in it, and you couldn't explain that to the police."

Fraxer's set expression didn't change. His gun was perfectly steady, aimed directly at Yale's heart, and his face was pale behind the gritty film of desert sand.

"Two," said Fraxer hoarsely.

"It won't work," said Yale, still fighting for time.

Fraxer showed no sign of having heard.

"Thr—" he began, and at that instant Yale made a desperate grab for the gun on the table.

A gun roared an angry message of death as a shot, a single shot, crashed out. A dark, red fluid welled from a black hole that had suddenly appeared in Fraxer's shirt front. He reached out in a blind effort to find something for support, failed, and then crumpled heavily to the floor.

YALE stood there for a second, staring at his own smoking gun. A slight pressure on the trigger of the other's revolver would have been enough to blast him down—but it had not come. By all the laws of chance it should have happened. But it hadn't.

There was a low moan from the fallen man, and in an instant Yale was kneeling beside him. Fraxer's lips moved feverishly.

"Clipping in pocket," he managed to gasp, "explains why."

Blood bubbled up from between his clenched teeth, a convulsive shudder shook his body, and then he was quite still.

Yale got the clipping from the dead man's pocket and unfolded it carefully. It was dated May 15, 1951!

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"Fraxer to die in chair for murder of Walter Yale," read the column headline. A description of the trial followed.

Walter Yale saw a few lines written in a familiar scrawl at the bottom of the clipping. He read them eagerly.

"It seems certain from this clipping that sometime in the future I shall kill Walter Yale. Yale is too fine a man to die. It is infinitely better that I be killed first to prevent this from happening. I will send the time machine where he can't use it to undo my suicide. This seems the only way. This clipping and this confession will clear him. He shot in self-defense. He didn't know I never intended to fire."

There the writing stopped. Yale bent to examine the weapon that should have been fired first. The safety-catch of Fraxer's gun had not even been released. Fraxer really had never intended to shoot, but had deliberately let himself be killed.

A hoarse sob tore itself from Walter Yale's throat. He looked at the still face of his dead partner, at the lips curved slightly in what seemed almost a smile. Suddenly Yale felt very tired.

And he got up slowly and walked out.

OSCAR SHOOTS IT OUT!

Once again the little Martian detective faces a baffling mystery! But it takes more than guns to halt the grim disaster that faces the California coast as the polar ocean streams change course. All the science of the ancient world of Mars must be brought into play when Oscar "shoots the works" against the mystery of THE TALKING TOTEMS . . . James Norman's most thrilling "Oscar of Mars" story. Don't miss it in the big

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QUACKERY in the HEAVENS

By ARNOLD GREGORY

Debunking the pseudo-science of Astrology. Here's a little logic applied to the "science" of the stars.

IT is just about time that the scientists of the United States make a concerted effort to stamp out the practice of astrology, one of the most costly delusions to which man has ever succumbed. Every year, in this country alone, astrologers live off the exceedingly gullible American public to the tune of millions of dollars of hard-earned money.

However, Americans may take some slight solace from the fact astrologers have "taken" the gullible of every nation in the world, since literally the dawn of time. Unfortunately it took America with its wealth and commercializing genius to elevate astrology into the class of definitely Big Business.

At least two hundred and fifty newspapers in this country carry columns devoted to the prognostications of the planets and there are at least a dozen magazines circulated nationally, which are devoted exclusively to this expensive delusion. Radio Stations do their bit in promulgating this superstitious nonsense by maintaining radio programs devoted to the broadcasting of astrological predictions.

There might be an excuse, however slight, for this enormous expenditure of money and mediums if there was anything faintly beneficial in astrology. But the truth is that this form of star gazing is just a costly hoax, completely valueless and utterly worthless from any point of view.

During the last three hundred years one of the few things upon which scientists have agreed, has been that the stars have not the slightest connection with man's destiny. It has also been one of their chief sources of despair that intelligent, free-thinking people would allow themselves to be victimized by such a superstitious myth.

For, basically, that's all there is to the "science" of astrology. It all began with the ancient astronomers of Assyria and Babylonia, and later in Greece and Rome. These ancients named the prominent members of our solar system after the mythical gods and goddesses of their barbaric religions. Gradually it became believed that these planets, named after their gods, possessed the same supreme power of the gods themselves. That, in a nutshell, is the actual basis for the astrological mumbo-jumbo which is costing us a pretty penny today.

Reliable historians are agreed that the gods of the ancient Greek and Roman mythology never actually existed, but astrologers ignore this blithely and continue on their merry and profitable way. A prominent astronomer at one of our leading universities has this to say on the apparent absurdities of astrology.

"The astrologers contend that your character is determined by certain planets, selected according to their position at the time of your birth. But thousands of people are born every day at the same hour—and yet no two of these people have the same character or abilities, or achieve equal success in life. Even if we were affected by any influence of the heavenly bodies, why lay so much stress on planetary arrangement at the moment of birth? Why not at the time of conception? If you believe the time of birth is important, then you must believe that a physician changes a child's whole future when he hastens birth for the benefit of the mother."

Perhaps the gullible actually do. But two events in the last century should shake the credulity of the most ardent disciple of astrology. They were the discovery of the two planets, Uranus and Neptune. Now previous to their discovery astrologers had decided exactly what each of the known planet's effect on human destiny was.

But with the discovery of two huge planets that had obviously gone on through the preceding centuries shirking their job of directing and influencing human affairs, the astrologers had a little explaining to do. Embarrassing questions were being popped at them. Questions such as: Why wasn't the intervention of these two planets noticed? Or did they possess the power to intervene in human affairs? If they didn't—and they were larger than Mars

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and Venus and Mercury combined—how could the other planets possess the power to intervene?

The astrologers were not long stumped. They ignored completely the past activity of these two planets, but they had ambitious plans for their future. Evangeline Adams, a clever woman who had discovered the lucrative benefits of astrology, solved the problem of Neptune's and Uranus' unemployment. She put Uranus to work influencing the railroads and Neptune took over the strenuous job of affecting the aviation industry.

The theory of astrology is that the stellar bodies do influence human affairs. And astrologers are enabled to retire early in life, by merely informing the masses of the particular days and months when stellar intervention in their affairs is favorable for business transactions, pleasure trips, proposals and when to take the cake out of the oven.

Newspapers carrying daily astrology columns defend their position on the ground that the forecasts merely "amuse" their readers and that no harm is done. If they do not consider the perpetuation of a dangerous and costly delusion harmful, then perhaps they are justified. It is absolutely not true that the columns on astrology are printed to amuse readers. They are printed because, unfortunately, there are still enough of Barnum's "minute men" to make it good business.

On the air, however, the situation has improved. When Evangeline Adams began her series of talks on astrology in 1930 she received 150,000 requests for horoscopes in the first three months. After that mail came tumbling in at the rate of 4,000 letters a day. Mrs. Adams was finally taken off the air by the Federal Communications Commission after pressure was brought to bear by the American Astronomical Society and the American Society of Magicians—who insisted, with some logic, that people who are being fooled should be told about it.

Within the last decade a hundred or more astrologers have been broadcast coast-to-coast, but most of them dropped off when the Federal Communications Commission began investigating their claims and statements. It has been proven that protests by listeners are just as effective as the more formal action of the Federal Commission.

If a listener resents having his intelligence mocked, and the minds of his children impregnated with stupid and possibly harmful drivel, he can switch the set off. But it would be better still if he would write the station telling them *why* he shut it off.

The post office department has cracked down on some of the thousands of astrologers who are duping the American people so shamelessly, but unfortunately the vast number continues to operate unchecked. Only in a few instances have they been able to force them from the pages of the magazines and today hundreds of those phoney forecasters are receiving a steady stream of quarters from their advertisements. For these they return a mimeographed, generalized "character analysis" which can be printed for a few cents.

Some people will always be ready and eager to dig deep for the operators of this planetary shell game. These unfortunates enjoy a vicarious sense of importance through their affinity with the heavens, or else they are enabled to explain away their failure, consoled in the knowledge that it took the whole Solar System to pin *their* shoulders to the mat.

The rest of the advocates of astrology, those who are being deceived by the idea that there is something to astrology after all, had better wake up and put their wallets back in their pockets while there is still something left.

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Question: Would a criminal be safe if he hid in—hell?

Question: Do you think witches really exist—and can they control men by some mysterious power?

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»»» Introducing «««

THE AUTHOR

JOHN BROOME

BEFORE writing this, I was stretched out on my belly before the great fireplace in my apartment, seventy-five stately stories above the teeming street. A silky mat of woven gazelle furs tickled my chin pleasantly, and with one hand I toyed idly with the ancient deck of Tarot Trumps that a khedive in Iran had given me for leaving his country unscathed.

My Javanese maid-servant, *Jui,* caught my eye as she polished a vase of Ming-yellow that stood near the oriel windows. I turned over on my back and stared musingly at the ceiling.

"Jui," I said, "the editor wants an autobiographical sketch—you know the editor, he's the model for that little rag doll I made where I stick all those pins and mutter innocent but insidious doggerel. What shall I write?"

"Write, *bwana?—*" (Jui was once married to an African who taught her his *give*) "Why, write the truth, of course."

Jui as usual succeeded in making me feel as small and undignified as a soy-bean merely by arching her lacquered eyebrows.

"If I do, Jui," I groaned, "you won't exist any longer."

Jui's shrug was so delicate, so evanescent that I could have sworn it was but a gust that ruffled her nylon blouse. Nevertheless, she conveyed her meaning.

"Very well," I mentally pouted, "if you don't care, Jui, neither do I. I'll tell the truth."

So here it is, my poor life laid bare—with all its tiny joys and sorrows unmercifully revealed by the spotlight of truth. To get started, I ain't been anywhere and I ain't seen nothin'. I wouldn't know a Persian khedive from a camel. In fact I'm not sure I'd know a camel. Why should I? It would certainly be a one-sided friendship.

All my life I've lived in the back bay country of Massachusetts. My father and his father all down the line have been back bay. Some say our family is in a rut, but that is merely a point of view. Another view is that we Broomes have always loved the rugged shore of Mass. too much to ever leave it for long.

Be that as it may, I'm told that I was born on my father's thirty foot sailboat during a gale that is still talked of on the coast. My pappy still insists that I tried to grab an oar to help him, but of course that's a parent's natural exaggeration. My grandpappy, who was along, swears to the story, but then there ain't a damn thing grandpappy won't swear to—or at.

The Broomes have been shipwrights on the bay ever since they landed—which by some accounts was well ahead of Leif Ericsson. As a result, the smells of pine and oak are familiar things to me. Only I can't go near them, pines and oaks, I mean. I'm allergic. Father almost died of shame when he found a son of his broke out into a rash every time he handled an oak beam. I think he would have disinherited me then and there if there had been anything left of the Broome Shipbuilding Co. to disinherit me from. As it was, he could only lie down on his bed and from time to time cast an eye like a stricken animal in my direction. He never rose again.

Life in our town is of rustic simplicity and nothing extraordinary ever occurs. However, I'll never forget the first time I wore shoes. The county schoolteacher insisted on it. She said a boy of twenty-four should come to school with shoes on. I didn't see why, but I dutifully reported the matter to pappy. His first reaction

(Concluded on page 144)

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READER'S PAGE

JULY ISSUE SWELL

Sirs:

I just finished the July issue, and I think it's swell. Here are the stories: (1) "Goddess Of Fire"; (2) "Doorway of Vanishing Men"; (3) "Three Terrible People"; (4) "City Of Lost Souls"; (5) "Robots Can't Lie"; (6) "Abner Schlap's Strange Insight"; (7) "Murdered—Yet Alive."

William P. McGivern is my favorite author. Get more of his stories. R. L. Bellem's story should have been in *Amazing Stories* because it's pure s.f.

The front cover was very good, but the kneeling creature didn't correspond to the description in the story. Why don't you have a back cover?

All the inside illustrations were good, especially Magarian's drawing for "Abner Schlap's Strange Insight." His drawing for "City Of Lost Souls" was also very good. (Quite a girl.)

Lionel Batty, Jr.,
1485 N. Morningside Dr., N. E.,
Atlanta, Ga.

"What's a five-letter word beginning with E meaning a planet full of belligerent bipeds?"

As we understand it, the garb of the priest in "Goddess Of Fire" was fantastic. Perhaps the artist's conception of it is what you see on the cover. We have ad contracts for the back cover. Of course, McGivern and Magarian will be back with more. We'll try to keep science fiction in Amazing Stories *exclusively.—Ed.*

SLAM BANG

Sirs:

The July issue is super-colossal, slam bang magazine if there ever was one. But I don't think Jep Powell was up to his standard. "Goddess Of Fire" was outstanding. More of "Carson Of Venus", please.

The art work is as usual. All artists are outstanding but Krupa. He stands out like a white man among an African tribe of savages. His figures are stiff, but he is a whiz at machinery. More Mac girls, please, preferably with just a cellophane dress on. Yum! Yum!

Anthony Ahearn,
3170 Valhalla Place,
The Bronx, N. Y.

There'll be more "Carson of Venus", and also more Mac girls. One coming up soon for a story by Joseph J. Millard that'll knock your eye out! And another for a story that hasn't been written yet; but if it's half as good as the cover, it'll knock your other eye out!—Ed.

CORRECTION

Sirs:

I hate to spoil a good story, but the fact is that you have mixed up the following two bits of history:

(1) Otis Adelbert Kline and I each submitted our Antmen-On-Venus story (his "Planet Of Peril" and my "The Radio Man") to Edwin A. Baird on the same day. In fact, Baird introduced us to each other. He did not tell either of us the subject matter of the other's story, but he advised each of us to submit it to Bob Davis. Acting on this tip, I sent the mss. to Davis' home address. Kline submitted to the office. The delay while Kline's story worked up through the staff gave me the edge. Kline's story was published six years later, but it brought him book publication, which I never attained.

(2) I loaned Burroughs a scientific book entitled "A Journey To The Earth's Interior" or "Have The Poles Really Been Discovered"? by Marshall B. Gardner. Each of us wrote a center-of-the-earth story, based on the book, and our two stories appeared the same month, with almost identical plot (the story in which he combined Tarzan and Pellucidar; and my "The

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Radio Fliers") his in Donald Kennicott's book, and mine in the magazine edited by Bob Davis (not now associated with same).

Ralph Milne Farley,
1265 Fairview Ave.,
South Milwaukee, Wisc.

Thanks, Mr. Farley, for putting us straight. We always purposely mix these things up so we get another letter to print in the following issue—or is that alibi too weak?—Ed.

CURIOSITY GOT THIS READER

Sirs:

When I first picked up your magazine, it was only because my curiosity prompted me to do so. I read the magazine through and was so well pleased with it that I immediately ran out and bought *Amazing Stories.*

Since that time I have never missed an issue of either publication (a year and a half).

Because I missed the first three copies of *Fantastic Adventures,* do you think you could find it possible to print a request for me for those first issues and also for a copy of the New Adam?

James T. Kerr,
11 Nassau Road,
Upper Montclair, N. J.

You can get back copies of all FA issues by sending 20c each to our circulation department. The New Adam is out of print, and we'll put your request in the correspondence corner.—Ed.

POWELL'S ARTICLE

Sirs:

"The Return of Circe" is a swell yarn, and the unexpected humorous touches helped a great deal. But you are still rather stingy with pics—there should have been at least two more, featuring Atlas and Phemus. The cover had a few inconsistencies but was well drawn.

Magarian again has the best pics. (Boy am I eating my words in that letter of July.)

Powell's article—oh, oh! You shouldn't have printed it. You never can tell what people may lay hands on it. I wonder—will the ladies put us all in institutions by ourselves, or just massacre us? (gentle shudder). Jep Powell—Benedict Arnold of the Men of Earth! Somebody will have to think up a brilliant counter-article.

But the best news is on page 144. "Coming Next Month—Mystery Of The Martian Pendulum." Well, it's about time! Do you remember when you first forecast that story? APRIL 1940! Listen, if it's so good you forecast it well over a year in advance, it must rank up with E. E. Smith at least! Anyway, bring it on. Ayre and Steber—boyoboy!

Paul Carter,
156 S. University St.,
Blackfoot, Idaho

Well, it's this way. Your editor decided the story needed drastic revision, and now, with the war and all, and sinkings, he asked Steber to finish it up—and no time to do it.—Ed.

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5.25-17	2.45	1.15
28x5.25-18	2.45	1.15
29x5.25-19	2.45	1.15
30x5.25-20	2.50	1.15
31x5.25-21	2.60	1.15
5.50-17	2.75	1.15
28x5.50-18	2.75	1.15
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Sirs:

The August cover was a let-down. Here I had been waiting weeks for a beautiful McCauley masterpiece and instead I find a mediocre cover by a new artist. Please don't trick me like that again. The illustrations were swell, with Krupa and Magarian running off with the honors. My, how that Magarian has improved. Almost 100%.

"The Return of Circe" is undoubtedly the finest "pure fantasy" you've published. I doubt whether a story as entertaining as that will be printed for some time.

I don't want to comment on the contest story, as I still have hopes of getting the right solution. Williams, Wilcox, and McGivern all had good yarns. Say, just what is the matter with Don; his last few stories in FA and AS? They don't have the punch of his previous ones?

Vincent Scullin,
Hotel Traymore,
Atlantic City, N. J.

What about that, Don Wilcox? Why don't you slam a peach back at him? Oh, you have given me one! Well, I'd say you were right. So, Mr. Scullin, just hold your britches on!—Ed.

FILL THE BILL

Sirs:

FA and AS fill the bill and entertain no end—and it surprises me how much good, common sense can be gleaned from its pages—to say nothing of the science content!

Robert Burnett,
326 S. Second Street,
Rockford, Illinois.

INTRODUCING THE AUTHOR

(Concluded from page 141)

was to call the schoolteacher a blasted radical and tell me to quit school. But I complained that I had just begun. So pappy compromised; he made me a pair of shoes with his own hands, just like he made the rest of our wearing apparel.

My footgear, when I finally showed up shod at the schoolhouse, created quite a sensation. They weren't ordinary shoes, no sir. Pappy was an artist in his way and a shipwright to his marrow. I guess he just couldn't *help* making ships. My shoes had tiny wrought-iron prows and eyelets fashioned like miniature portholes. My legs stuck up out of them like masts. The schoolteacher looked at me queerly through the din. After a time, she gave us the day off. The class whooped over to the river where we had a heck of a time sailing my shoes.

Soon afterward, my period of formal education ended. It wasn't that I minded being laughed at in school, but when I outgrew pappy's creations he just never got around to making me another pair.—*John Broome.*

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CORRESPONDENCE CORNER

Edward H. Holt, 1409 W. 6, Little Rock, Ark., would like to play chess by mail with residents of the U. S. A. or Canada . . . Frank McCourt, 516 W. 140th St., New York City, has current SF and fan magazines which he would like to exchange with fans who can call evenings . . . Fred Heinichen, 152 W. 62nd St., New York City, would like female pen pals, 16 to 18, in his city . . . Thomas McIntosh, 1210 N. 19th St., Superior, Wisc., has back issues of FANTASTIC ADVENTURES for sale . . . Richard L. Hiatt, 1410½ Gallia Ave., Portsmouth, O., would like correspondents in Central and South America, Philippines and Asia, interested in stamp collecting, view card collecting and science fiction; would like to trade "Warlord of Mars" for "After Worlds Collide," or Burroughs' stories . . . Joe J. Fortier, 1836 39th Ave., Oakland, Calif., Andover 2559, wishes to announce the operation of "The Golden Gate Futurians" fan club . . . M. H. Kritzberg, 4728 N. Crawford Ave., Chicago, Ill., has several hundred AMAZING STORIES and FANTASTIC ADVENTURES and miscellaneous SF magazines, in good condition with both covers, for sale; send for list . . . Dick Waite, Rural Route No. 1, wishes to change his address from Banker, N. Y. to Barker, N. Y. . . . Frank Robinson, 6636 S. Sacramento, Chicago, Ill., wishes to trade SF magazines and wants information about joining the Chicago Science Fiction League; would also like to hear from Chicago fans . . . Fred Heinichen (address above) wants the address of a Manhattan science fiction club . . . Claude Held, 494 Carlton St., Buffalo, N. Y., will trade SF magazines for U. S. A. and British North America stamps; also wants to trade stamps with collectors in Canada, etc. . . . Edwin Rothouse, 1727 Cheltenham Pl., Philadelphia, Pa., wishes foreign pen pals and will send all correspondents at least one SF magazine . . . Robert Richel, 424 Paxton St., Paterson, N. J., wishes correspondents, preferably female, 14 to 17; will reply immediately . . . Stanley Werbin, 589 Blake Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y., is confined to bed and is anxious to correspond with fans . . . Stanley Arnold, 600 W. Clinton St., Frankfort, Ind., wishes to purchase SF and fantasy magazines or books and early issues of AMAZING STORIES . . . Osmond G. A. Salmon, c/o The Modern Optical Co., 122 Tower St., Kingston, Jamaica, B. W. I., needs a great number of back issues of AMAZING STORIES and FANTASTIC ADVENTURES; collectors: communicate with him.

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Well—frankly, it *isn't* enough. To get that job you want, to get that bigger salary—you'll have to *train* yourself—at least, if you want to get ahead in a reasonable time.

Yet, if you have ambition enough to study for a few months, you can get the exact training you need—easily—the LaSalle way.

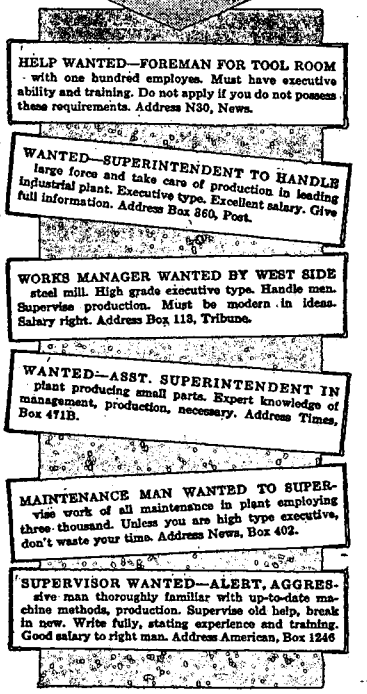
Take a foreman's job, for example: He's a much more important man today than he was even a few years ago. Management depends on him. But he must be good. Nor will old methods do. His ideas must be new—as new as the machines he supervises—as young as the young men he must direct and handle.

How can a fellow learn all that? How can *you* learn it? There's a way —the proved LaSalle way. By means of it you can learn to solve just such problems—to cut costs—reduce inefficiency—handle new work, new men and new machines in new ways.

Or, take a supervisor's job—or perhaps a works manager's job. If you're already a foreman, what are you doing to fit yourself for their jobs? Routine effort—even hard conscientious work—may not be enough! They seldom are.

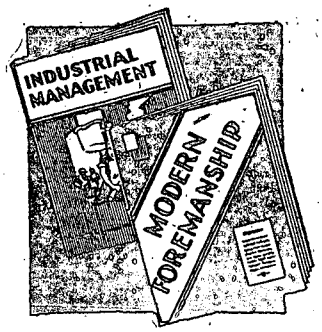
But just as an ordinary industrial worker can, through LaSalle Home Study, become a foreman, so a foreman, a cost clerk, a cost accountant, a mechanical engineer, a department manager, an inspector, an assistant superintendent, and all the other minor executives of any industrial organization—can fit themselves for that desirable job ahead—with its *tremendously* desirable rewards!

Does all this sound too good to be true? If it does, we'll make you a proposition—we'll ask you to gamble a one-cent post card against the proof of our statements—proof that has built this institution over a 33-year period and scattered our members through nearly a million positions in all countries of the world.



Yes, it will cost you exactly one cent—or three cents if you fill out the coupon and mail it—to obtain a copy of either of the two fascinating books offered below.

Get one of these books today! Plan your future, investigate the *proven* possibilities of LaSalle training in Modern Foremanship or Modern Industrial Management.



LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY

A CORRESPONDENCE INSTITUTION

Dept. 875-MF, Chicago, Ill.

Please send me, free of all cost or obligation, full information about your executive training in the industrial field. I am interested in:

☐ Modern Foremanship ☐ Industrial Management

Name.....

Present Position.....*Age*.....

Address.....*City*.....

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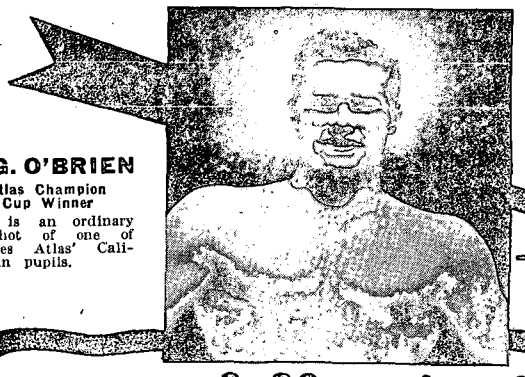
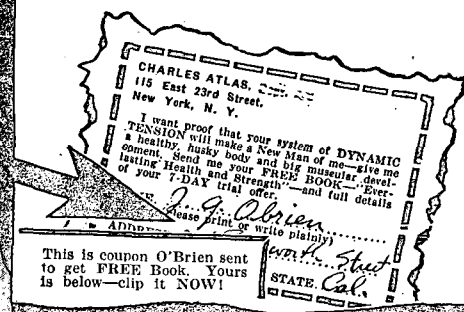


J. G. O'BRIEN
Atlas Champion Cup Winner

This is an ordinary snapshot of one of Charles Atlas' Californian pupils.

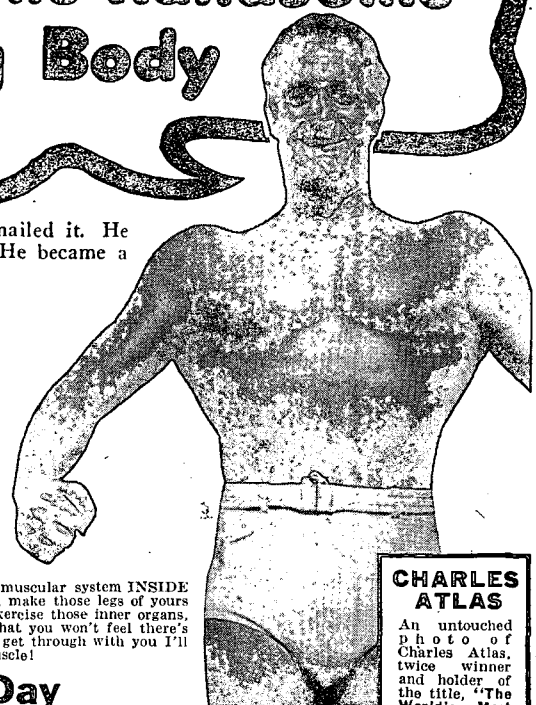


This is coupon O'Brien sent to get FREE Book. Yours is below—clip it NOW!

...and Here's the Handsome Prize-Winning Body I Gave Him!

J. G. O'BRIEN saw my coupon. He clipped and mailed it. He got my free book and followed my instructions. He became a New Man. NOW read what he says:

"Look at me NOW! *'Dynamic Tension'* WORKS! I'm proud of the natural, easy way you have made me an 'Atlas Champion'!" *J. G. O'Brien.*



CHARLES ATLAS
An untouched photo of Charles Atlas, twice winner and holder of the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

"I'll prove that YOU, too, can be a NEW MAN"—*Charles Atlas*

I DON'T care how old or young you are, or how ashamed of your present physical condition you may be. If you can simply raise your arm and flex it I can add SOLID MUSCLE to your biceps—yes, on each arm,—in double-quick time! Only 15 minutes a day—right in your own home—is all the time I ask of you! And there's no cost if I fail.

I can broaden your shoulders, strengthen your back, develop your whole muscular system INSIDE and OUTSIDE! I can add inches to your chest, give you a vise-like grip, make those legs of yours lithe and powerful. I can shoot new strength into your old backbone, exercise those inner organs, help you cram your body so full of pep, vigor and red-blooded vitality that you won't feel there's even "standing room" left for weakness and that lazy feeling! Before I get through with you I'll have your whole frame "measured" to a nice, new, beautiful suit of muscle!

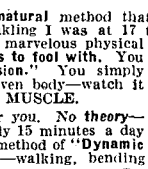
Only 15 Minutes a Day

"Dynamic Tension!" That's the ticket! The identical **natural** method that I myself developed to change my body from the scrawny, skinny-chested weakling I was at 17 to my present super-man physique! Thousands of other fellows are becoming marvelous physical specimens—**my way.** I give you **no gadgets or contraptions to fool with.** You learn to develop your strength through **"Dynamic Tension."** You simply utilize the DORMANT muscle-power in your own God-given body—watch it increase and multiply double-quick into real, solid LIVE MUSCLE.

My method—**"Dynamic Tension"**—will *turn the trick for you. No theory*—every exercise is **practical.** And, man, **so easy!** Spend only 15 minutes a day in your own home. From the very start you'll be using my method of **"Dynamic Tension"** almost unconsciously every minute of the day—walking, bending over, etc.—to BUILD MUSCLE and VITALITY.

FREE BOOK "EVERLASTING HEALTH AND STRENGTH"

In it I talk to you in straight-from-the-shoulder language. Packed with inspirational pictures of myself and pupils—fellows who became NEW MEN in strength, my way. Let me show you what I helped THEM do. See what I can do for YOU! For a real thrill, send for this book *today.* AT ONCE.



CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 9H, 115 E. 23rd St., N. Y. C.

CHARLES ATLAS
Dept. 9H, 115 East 23rd St., New York City.

I want the proof that your system of **"Dynamic Tension"** can help make me a New Man—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send me your FREE book, "Everlasting Health and Strength." No obligation.

Name .....
(Please print or write plainly)

Address .....

City ..... State.....

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FOOT ITCH

ATHLETE'S FOOT

WHY TAKE CHANCES?

The germ that causes the disease is known as Tinea Trichophyton. It buries itself deep in the tissues of the skin and is very hard to kill. A test made shows it takes 15 minutes of boiling to destroy the germ, whereas, upon contact; laboratory tests show that H. F. will kill the germ Tinea Trichophyton within 15 seconds.

H. F. was developed solely for the purpose of relieving Athlete's foot. It is a liquid that penetrates and dries quickly. You just paint the affected parts. H. F. gently peels the skin, which enables it to get to parasites which exist under the outer cuticle.

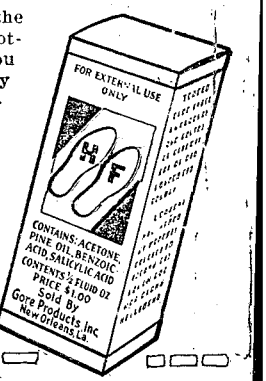
ITCHING OFTEN RELIEVED QUICKLY

As soon as you apply H. F. you may find that the itching is relieved. You should paint the infected part with H. F. every night until your feet are better. Usually this takes from three to ten days.

H. F. should leave the skin soft and smooth. You may marvel at the quick way it brings you relief. It costs you nothing to try, so if you are troubled with Athlete's Foot why wait a day longer?

H. F. SENT ON FREE TRIAL

Sign and mail the coupon, and a bottle of H. F. will be mailed you immediately. Don't send any money and don't pay the postman any money; don't pay anything any time unless H. F. is helping you. If it does help you, we know you will be glad to send us $1 for the bottle at the end of ten days. That's how much faith we have in H. F. Read, sign and mail the coupon today.



PAY NOTHING TILL RELIEVED

Send Coupon

According to the Government Health Bulletin No. E-28 at least 50% of the adult population of the United States are being attacked by the disease known as Athlete's Foot.

Usually the disease starts between the toes. Little watery blisters form, and the skin cracks and peels. After a while, the itching becomes intense, and you feel as though you would like to scratch off all the skin.

BEWARE OF IT SPREADING

Often the disease travels all over the bottom of the feet. The soles of your feet become red and swollen. The skin also cracks and peels, and the itching becomes worse and worse.

Get relief from this disease as quickly as possible, because it is both contagious and infectious, and it may go to your hands or even to the under arm or crotch of the legs.

GORE PRODUCTS, Inc. N.F.

847 Perdido St., New Orleans, La.

Please send me immediately a bottle of H. F. for foot trouble as described above. I agree to use it according to directions. If at the end of 10 days my feet are getting better, I will send you $1. If I am not entirely satisfied, I will return the unused portion of the bottle to you within 15 days from the time I receive it.

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